

ABBY LORIMIER, age 17:

Dear Mr. Zander,

I keep hesitating to finalize and send my tour white sheet. It's not that I don't have thoughts I want to share, but that each day the experiences I had on tour become increasingly powerful. When a person is injured, they often don't feel the pain for a little while. Perhaps it was the same for me with tour, but for the exact opposite reason. In the moment, everything was fun and great and inspiring, but I know that these 3 weeks will have a ripple effect throughout my entire life.

One hour ago, Smetana's Moldau came on the radio and I could not decide whether to grin idiotically or cry. We were there. Every place we went changed music and, in doing so, changed the course of history. Music students, especially those from outside of Europe, often view European composers as very abstract individuals. We know they were real, but in our minds they are elevated to a deity-like status. Visiting the church where Bach premiered so many works and driving through the same Czech countryside that Dvorak wrote about will forever change the way I internalize the human emotions portrayed in the music that we regularly play and listen to.

One day, I hope to become an orchestral cellist. The sound of a symphony orchestra is unlike anything else in the world, but the thing that makes me want to sit in a concert hall for the rest of my life is the feel of the music. The vibrations in the air when a chord is perfect, the feel of basses rumbling through the floor and into my feet, the silences so loud it seems the universe might explode. I do not believe any other human experience can make one go on such an emotional roller coaster in the space of ten minutes. Having only just turned 17, my adult-life seems very far away. There are so many obstacles in the way. But, even with college auditions looming over my shoulder, the BPYO tour has only reaffirmed my drive.

I was worried that 8 concerts would feel like a lot - and it did. I was worried it would feel like too much. However, even when exhaustion set in somewhere around Berne and my eyelids became prone to drooping during the slowest movement of Schoenberg in which the inside cellos only play three notes at the very end of the piece, I never once stopped loving it. I don't think I will ever stop loving it - BPYO, classical music, playing in an orchestra, visiting new places, experiencing a time long past.

Thank you Mr. Zander for all you have given me. Thank you Mr. Zander for all you have given all of us. You told a story in rehearsal about visiting a school to do a talk. You said that they called to cancel the talk because only 15 teachers signed up, but you told them to have it go on because, if you could give something to those 15 teachers, each one would turn around and transfer it to their own students who would then pass it on to their friends, or family, or students in the future and, in the end, 15 teachers could make a very big impact. You have met a lot of people in your life (not that you're old, well, maybe you are, but that is something to be proud of!) and they are now scattered across the globe. If a fraction of those people feel a fraction as changed as I do by having met you, together, we've all changed the world.

Much love,
Abby

LILY JOSEFSBERG, age 21:

Dear Maestro Zander,

I always have such a hard time knowing what to say in these white sheets. Writing is not my forte, and so after two weeks of non-stop excitement and challenges, it is very hard to put what I am feeling into words.

Last night, however, was a very memorable concert for me. I was sitting up in the balcony for the Bartok, looking right over the stage. I had the best view I have ever had while listening to this piece – a clear view of everyone's faces and instruments. As I sat watching the orchestra, I heard things I had never heard before in my 25+ times hearing this piece played. I was also able to see the little things like section members lightly tapping their leg to applaud a solo, or the bows of 40 violins amazingly in sync with one another. With such a taxing piece, I was amazed at how it seemed like everyone was just as excited to play it as the first time in Symphony Hall. In that moment in particular, I was so proud to be a part of this BPYO family for its three tremendous years. We have grown not only as musicians, but as mentors and friends. I have seen people pushed to their limits on this tour, but every time we step on stage, everything else is pushed aside and our only focus is the music we love to play.

I have played some of the best orchestral piccolo repertoire with you, which in turn helped confirm my decision to pursue a piccolo masters at Peabody. The opportunities you gave me in this orchestra have exceeded my expectations beyond what I thought I could ever accomplish. I hope to be able to come back to Boston and play in your orchestras again soon. Thank you for believing in me, and for being a true inspiration for us all.

Love,
Lily

HAYLEY MILLER, age 20:

People say that they have had experiences they will remember for the rest of their lives. Not only is this tour an experience that I will remember for the rest of my life, it is an experience that will influence how I live every day for the rest of my life. Our Tour of Possibility has given me a renewed sense of gratitude, respect, and purpose that combine into a powerful force to do good in this world.

Gratitude – Some people will spend their whole lives in one country, state, or even city. Very few people have the opportunity to see three of the most beautiful countries in the world with 135 of the most loving and talented people and follow their dreams all because somebody generously provided the means for them to do so. And seeing that only four of the sponsors were from my family, most of the cost was paid by someone who doesn't even know me, yet they have given me the greatest gift. Besides seeing these beautiful countries, we were able to be a

part of them – by making music for their people, learning about their history, developing an appreciation for their culture and for me, realizing the beauty of their land through running. (Actually, during our six days in Switzerland, I ran 59 miles because I found myself mesmerized by the beautiful sights.) But someone else provided all of those experiences for me, in fact many many people made this tour possible and to them I owe my greatest appreciation.

Respect – Before this tour I probably knew the names of ten other people in this orchestra. And in the past 17 days, I have met some of the most beautiful souls, many of whom I have sat next to all year long. It's no wonder our level of playing rose significantly throughout this tour as we grew closer and developed a deeper respect for each individual. Every person in this orchestra has a story to share, which is easy to overlook when our heads are preoccupied with our own thoughts. Especially since I am headed straight to another music festival, I will approach every encounter with an open heart and mind.

Purpose – I believe that one of the main contributors to losing hope is forgetting our purpose. Although I may have started the tour and first concerts with feelings of doubt and fear, surely by our final concerts I was reminded of what a great privilege and joy it is to play with this orchestra, graciously accept all that the world has to offer and to be a vessel to share that with the world, in this case through music, because as a great writer once said, "If music be the food of love, play on." For the rest of my life, I plan to play with the spirit of love from this tour of possibility.

With much gratitude, Hayley Miller

JOE BLUMBERG, 18:

Dear Mr. Zander,

A few days ago when we ran into each other in the hallway before boarding the busses for Zurich, I mentioned that I had a note on my iPhone entitled "Last White Sheet" that I had been working on throughout the tour. Truth be told, I have had a document on my computer at home with the same title since my very first rehearsal of YPO in September, 2011. As soon as you told the story of the two shoe salesmen not ten minutes after rehearsal began, I was absolutely fascinated by you and by what you had to say about life, music and possibility. I remember recognizing that something very special was happening, and even, as melodramatic as this may sound, that someday it would have to come to an end. While I have tried to live in the moment as much as possible, over the last few months and weeks it became harder and harder to avoid the fact that the end of my time with you and with BPYO has finally arrived.

While the last notes of Nimrod in Lucerne brought tears to my eyes, I am not particularly sad about the end of my time with BPYO. I already feel a truly deep sense of nostalgia, but the overriding feeling is one of absolute and pure gratitude and joy; gratitude for friends, for music, for great adventures, for you, for Roz and Hansjorg, for Elizabeth and Mark, and for possibility itself. So, this white sheet has no requests, no observations, and no musical pertinence. It is simply meant to attempt to express my thanks for all you have given me over the past four years.

I'll start with the easy ones.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to play in your orchestra four years ago. As one of the youngest and certainly most inexperienced members of YPO, my learning curve was extraordinarily steep. In just a few months sitting next to Matt Ebisuzaki, the graduate student who was subbing as principal trumpet, I learned nearly everything I know about orchestral trumpet technique and rehearsal etiquette. I am sure that accepting a freshman trumpet player into your orchestra was not the most appealing thought, but I cannot thank you enough for taking that risk. Those first few months of YPO rapidly taught me the joys of being an orchestral musician, and I will forever be indebted to you for having given me that opportunity so early in life.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to play the best music in the world with the best people in the world on a weekly basis. When I think about all of the joyful moments I have spent at BFIT over the last three years' worth of Saturdays, I am almost dumbstruck – no kid should be so lucky! I cannot possibly imagine a better way to spend my weekends than by discovering the intricacies of the best music ever written with my very best friends.

Thank you for teaching me the value of breaking down barriers. You have taught me to see barriers of life as nothing more than an easily avoidable figment of imagination, something that has been subconsciously invented by society but that can be dis-invented just as easily. Some of my fondest memories of tour happened outside the bounds of what could be expected to happen on a tour such as ours. For example, no one would ever think that a group of teenagers would become as close friends with a leading Wagner scholar such as David St. George, and yet my group of friends had our most exciting and fun adventures when David was with us. He often joined us for lunch or sightseeing, and his presence was nothing but a joy. Because all of us live so fully in possibility and believe in the possibility of relationships across generations, the difference in our ages melted away, and we really became close friends. We're even planning a dinner party for later in the summer! Similarly, no one would ever think that two teenage boys (Arthur and I) from Boston would befriend a Swiss billionaire, and yet that happened, too. The miracle of breaking down barriers, from these to the one we broke down between the Swiss and their very own emotions, make life so much more vibrant. Thank you for showing me the value in that.

Trying to sum up all you have taught me about life itself is impossible, because learning from you has fundamentally shaped who I am and how I view our world. I guess the easiest way to put that into words is to thank you for teaching me that "it's all invented." You instilled in me a now-unwavering belief that the world is filled with possibility, and that the track *most* people take through life is not the only one available. You opened my eyes to the possibility of living a life that always seeks to turn lemons into lemonade, rather than one that follows the pervasive trend of the downward spiral. You taught me to realize that there is more than one way of living life and always more than one way to see a situation. The idea of living in possibility has firmly rooted itself in the deepest places of my mind, and its message of positivity and openness has affected every decision I make.

Thank you for teaching me to always look for the good in every situation. I keep a copy of the story of the two shoe salesmen in my back pocket wherever I go, as it has always stood out in my mind as one of the most remarkable stories you tell. The idea of refusing to accept defeat, of working through something with positivity, ingenuity, pragmatism and joy has affected every minute of my life. From the smallest trifles that could get in my way to some of life's biggest problems that have been thrown at me and my family over the past few years, this particular bit of philosophy has helped me sidestep the downward spiral an innumerable number of times. Reminding myself to always be the second shoe salesman has saved me from so much fruitless angst and worry. Whenever I feel myself being sucked into the downward spiral by a bad grade or a spat with a friend, a quick mental reminder to send that second telegram always brings me back into possibility. For the countless hours of worry and depression this lesson has saved me, thank you.

Thank you for teaching me to hold a steadfast belief in the possibilities of the human spirit. While this sounds intangible and vague, it has provided me with a huge amount of hope in a world that can appear to be spiraling out of control. While the news is filled with the burning of black churches in the South and of atrocities occurring in the Middle East, I somehow go to bed each night filled with hope. Watching the way you handle situations in your own life, from small hiccups on tour to the incident at NEC, has instilled in me a deep-set belief that a willing and open human spirit will always find a way. Even in the darkest corners, light can be found.

Thank you for making me acutely aware of how lucky I am to live the life I lead and to be surrounded by so much joy and beauty. You often take a minute during rehearsals or before concerts to remind us of how lucky we are to be in the same hall where Leonard Bernstein once conducted, or that we have the support of such spectacularly generous donors such as Hansjoerg, and your public appreciation for these things is certainly not lost on me. You taught me to always notice and appreciate the grandeur and specialness of life, and to never take *anything* for granted; that will stay with me forever. You taught me to appreciate the beauty of the art that I make, and how to share that art in order to bring more beauty and love to the world. As Picasso said, "The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away." You helped me find my gift, and you taught me the importance of giving it away.

After dinner at the restaurant at the top of the mountain in Bern, I was sitting on the patio with Brian Rolincik. After a few moments of silence as we gazed in awe at the glorious sunset, he said, "This doesn't make any sense, the world doesn't work like this!" He was remarking at how unbelievably special and happy our tour and time together had been in comparison to the general feeling of negativity that seems to affect everyone in the world *but* those in the BPYO. I responded, "But we're proving that it can." This tour was yet another successful experiment of a group of people living whole-heartedly in possibility, and of the world of wonderful things that can come out of living the way we do. This tour, with all of its magical moments that "shouldn't exist" but did, proved to me yet again the power of possibility.

Mr. Zander, thank you for the impact you have had on my life. I am sad to think that this tour was the end of my "tenure" with BPYO, but I am overwhelmed by feelings of joy and of happiness when I think about all I have learned and done over the past three years. While I

cannot be there physically every Saturday, you know that I will always show up, at least mentally, at Half Past Two.

I'll leave you with a quote from the musical *Wicked* that sums up what I want to say more than anything I've written thus far: "Because I knew you, I have been changed for the better. I have been changed for good."

With my deepest gratitude and love,

Joe Blumberg

GERALD KARNI, age 18:

Dear Mr. Zander,

Where to even begin? I would like to first of all apologize for only writing now. I wanted to be able to think about what to write very clearly, and doing that with all the emotions on the last day was just not something I was able to do. I am only now getting over the shock of realizing that my time with BPYO had ended and that I was saying goodbye to all my friends. I feel some sort of emptiness inside, and it is something I've never felt before. I am currently on a tour with Daniel Barenboim and with so many complete strangers. I know I will meet so many great musicians, but I know that at the same time I will be wishing all of the BPYO crew were with me.

Before I tell you about how much this whole journey has meant to me, I must acknowledge and thank a few people. I would like to thank Hansjoerg Wyss for his amazing generosity and belief in this organization, and Roz for being one of the most loving, caring, and inspiring women I have ever met. Her idea of possibility is inspiring! It is hard to put in words how much these two individuals have done for so many of us.

I would like to thank Mark Churchill. He is one hardworking man, and is always doing so much to make sure our adventures are packed with as many amazing musical activities as possible. Of course I have to thank Elisabeth. Elisabeth truly is super woman. Managing the BPO and the BPYO during the year already I am sure is so so much work, and on top she organized an amazing tour with so many things to do. We are all so lucky to have her. A huge thank you for all the chaperones on this tour. 17 days is a long time for them to be doing what they were doing, and they were the most relaxed people ever! It was truly fun having them around. A big thank you to David St. George. David is someone I always was intimidated by, and I don't even quite know why. But during the Wagner rehearsals and especially during this tour I have found a new friend. He is such a great individual, with so so much knowledge and has such a warm heart. He is somebody I have learned from a ton and somebody I will really miss! Lastly I would like to acknowledge Jonah. Over the last few years Jonah has become one of my best friends. His playing on the tour and the way he helped me grow as a musician is something I will thank him forever. He is a big musical inspiration to us all.

Now.... When I first joined the BPYO I was really overwhelmed. I had just switched from the violin to the viola while still struggling with learning the clef, and the first piece we played was Ein Heldenleben. It was a big deal. I could barely learn the notes, and was so amazed by all the other players. Throughout all three years I learned some of the hardest works, and with your leadership have learned so much, not only as a violist, but as a musician, and as a human being. I owe you such a thank you! I thank you for everything these past years! I thank you for always asking how I am doing, for inviting me to your home, always guiding me to make the best decisions possible, and for giving me the opportunities some musicians could only dream of! I mean... Which 18 year old violist plays Strauss Don Quixote 5 times all over the world, and plays in the best concert halls in the world?! This is something I will never ever ever take for granted and something that I will cherish forever!

I didn't throw myself, but you threw me into life and I like to think of myself as a pebble that grew. There is no doubt in my mind that every single one of my accomplishments is thanks to you!

I miss you and the BPYO a lot!

From the very bottom of my heart and with so much love,
Gerald

ADITYA MAHADIVAN, age 16:

It is impossible to sum up the tour in writing, but the best I can do is describe what I thought were some of the most special moments. Becoming so familiar with this music and living it every day of this tour made it possible to experience a kind of freedom during performance that is rarely felt and what I think music making is about. I remember before the tour I sent you an email with a link to Kopatchinskaja's interview, hoping that we could be as spontaneous and alive during performance as she was. Getting to know our music so well (the Schoenberg really clicked for me about halfway through the tour) made this ideal form of music making possible, and actually getting to see Kopatchinskaja was something I will not forget. Although the Beyeler Chamber concert was a relatively low profile event, I consider it one of the most unforgettable concerts I have been to, where I saw some extremely exciting music making by colleagues that affected me to the same extent as the first momentous performance I ever saw of Schubert's Death and the Maiden quartet.

Today in Lucerne, at the end of the Dvorak I felt what were for me completely new emotions, and the adrenaline rush in the closing bars reminded me of why we do music.

Since we have been so busy on tour, it has been difficult to really reflect on what we have done, but I think it will come to me when we return (I still find it hard to believe that we met the Berlin Phil) and have time to think.

But I am sure that we together have created some of the most special moments in the lives not only of each other, but of everyone we touch.

Thank you,
Aditya Mahadevan

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SETAREH PARVEARESH, age 18:

Dear Mr. Zander,

There are no words that I can compile together to express everything that this journey has made me feel. I am beyond grateful and still in shock about everything we did and saw. I was given opportunities on this tour that musicians dream of getting throughout their lifetime, and I received all of those wonders in 17 days.

What I've done with BPYO in the last year are things that I never imagined doing in the span of my Entire life. I remember the first time I played in symphony hall was with BPYO and I was beyond ecstatic. And now we have played in the Berlin Philharmonie together. Musicians dream of playing there and I'm only 18 and I can now say that I have played there with the most wonderful orchestra. One of the best things I learned on this tour was when Simon Rattle said, "life is not about music, music is about life." We very clearly experienced that in playing intensely and enjoying our surroundings intensely.

I never imagined being so touched by a piece after having played it so many times. When we played Nimrod last night, I couldn't help but release all the emotions that I have experienced in the past 17 days. The friendships I have made, the music that has been played, and the memories that were made will forever be kept and engraved in my heart. I also felt that at every performance we went to, we were able to touch the hearts of the audience and that they all felt our love and passion for the music. To have an audience give a huge round of applause is one of the most satisfying feelings, especially after an incredible performance. To think that I won't be apart of this incredible orchestra next year breaks my heart, but I will carry every lesson I have learned with every orchestra I play with.

Becoming a musician is a risk because that's what everyone around us tells us. I have never been more certain of my career choice after this tour. We were completely immersed in the idea of possibility and love of music and I realized that I never want to get out of this journey. I really believe that without the help of BPYO, I would not have been able to feel and understand music the way that I do now. I know that music is not just about playing notes, it's about understanding the story of what you are playing and feeling the power of the music.

I will be eternally grateful for all the opportunities you have granted me!

Much love,

Setareh

JUSTIN SMITH, age 18:

Dear Mr. Zander,

As many of us sat only feet behind the Berlin Philharmonic, Sir Simon Rattle spoke of his belief that music halls remember the beautiful music that have been made within them over the years. With that, Rattle was saying goodbye to one of the great flutists who had been with the Berlin Philharmonic for over 45 years. But as most of the crowd had filed out of the gorgeous hall, he returned to the stage and greeted many of us in BPYO with a beaming “Welcome.” To us, it was a memorable gesture of kindness, but to Sir Simon—as we later learned in his talk with the orchestra—it was so much more than that. In a night of saying goodbye to old friends and colleagues, he was welcoming the future of music and leaders into an ever-changing world. It was in that moment, I realized we weren’t just there to play in the Berlin Philharmonie, we were there to lead our generation into an exciting world of music, passion, and possibility. I, too, believe that the hallowed walls of many of the great concert halls will forever contain those most magical moments ever to flourish from a bow or sing from a reed. It’s why the hall where Don Giovanni was premiered isn’t just a hall; you can actually feel Mozart’s presence as you gaze upon those glorious blue walls. However, if I may, I care to add to Sir Simon’s belief. I believe halls aren’t the only things that take on anthropomorphic qualities. After my two tours with BPYO, I am confident that we develop a very special connection to pieces of music; the music itself has a memory of its own. Forever in my life, anytime I play Mahler 2 or listen to it on the radio, I will instantly recall all those precious moments in the Concertgebouw, Haarlem Cathedral, or De Doelan in Rotterdam. I will think of all the excitement, tenacity, and drips of tears that went into every glorious performance. Because of that, after the first tour, Mahler 2 has never been the same to me; it’s very special now. I suspect the same will go for every single piece we played on this tour; they are no longer just pieces of music but intertwined in our life in a very powerful way. It was almost predictable that some amazing memories would be made on the tour, and by demonstrating possibility it would change people’s lives, but who would have thought that each piece would never ever be the same to us, or perhaps even the audience? For every time Dvorak Cello Concerto is played on the radio, how are we not going to be able to think about the everlasting moments we made with the legendary Natalia Gutman in the Berlin Philharmonie to a packed audience? To me, these new connections with music are what make these two BPYO tours so unique and spectacular.

I don’t think it’s truly possible to describe in words what it was like to play in the Berlin Philharmonie, but at the same time it’s impossible to leave out. Through BPYO, I have performed in many of the worlds greatest concert halls: Boston Symphony Hall several times, Carnegie Hall, the Concertgebouw, and many others. Generally accepted by many both outside and inside music, is that performing in Carnegie Hall is the pinnacle of concert halls to perform in. I think it’s hard to deny that there is an aura around Carnegie that’s truly distinct, and it’s pretty cool to be able to say I’ve performed there. However, nothing compares to the feeling of performing at the Berlin Philharmonie. When you take a look at the performance schedule of the Berlin Philharmonie, the only thing listed on the page other than the Berlin Philharmoniker was

the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra. Climbing up the stairs and gasping at the Pentagonal shaped hall, may have been the very first time in my life that I was at a complete loss for words. I guess all I could do was take a large deep breath and let the music flow through my horn. Music gives life to things that can't be put into words, but I never thought I'd find myself in a scenario where the only thing I could do was breathe out music. There isn't a moment of that concert I won't remember, and the moment the audience rose to a standing ovation has touched my heart like a warm hug from my mom after a tough day. It was in that moment I realized I will always have a reason to stand tall and proud. As a side note, Mr. Zander mentioned that there is very little chance that any of us in BPYO will ever perform in the Berlin Philharmonie again. To that, and I think I speak for all 120 of us in BPYO when I say: Challenge Accepted Mr. Zander!

I do make one request of everyone involved on this tour:

Perhaps the most exciting part of the tour is the fact that we only dipped our feet in the surface of the potential difference we can all make. Think of it: 120 of us came together and changed the perception of many of what they thought could be possible; and yet, all of us will go our separate ways with all the memories and lessons learned on this tour. Think of what each of us can do! I believe that this tour has been very important to each and every one of us, and for that it is like a pair of shoes. The memories, lessons, and insights gained on this tour will act as a base for the rest of our lives. We do not just sit, stare, and think about a pair of shoes; put them on and run with them. Let them guide you to new places and experiences. Being sentimental doesn't mean you're just nostalgic; take the time to reflect on the memories but hold on dearly to what you learned. If you could make a difference to that many people in only 17 days, think about how many people you can potentially affect in your life. Other people are desperately searching for memories and lessons to act as a guiding pair of shoes too, they just don't know it yet....

On a personal note, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart Mr. Zander for inviting me on the tour, and everything you have given me these past few years. If it weren't for you, I most likely would not still be involved in music; but more importantly, I wouldn't be waking up with a smile on my face every morning. I owe a great deal to you, and I wish I could express my appreciation 10,000X more. Words cannot express how thankful I am. I guess for now all I can do to thank you is to put on my possibility shoes every morning and find my voice to make an impact on this world. I can't wait to make you proud! I dearly hope that this was not my very last concert with you; I won't just miss the music, but the care and passion you put into every beat of every piece. Let me know if you ever need an extra pair of shining eyes around again; it was an honor to come back for this tour. You managed to change my life again.

Love,

Justin Smith

RILEY GIAMPAOLO, age 19:

Dear Maestro Zander,

First of all I would like to just thank you so much for everything you do and have done for me and the rest of the orchestra. I am so grateful that you have provided me with the opportunity to perform such incredible repertoire in such surreal halls and places, and realize all of the possibilities in life that I never would have imagined before all of this. Honestly there were times on the tour that I felt exhausted and could have easily let it get to me and effect my attitude and performance, but I could always think back to your speeches and realize what is possible and that there's no reason to let it get to me. Prague was definitely my favorite stop. It was the most beautiful city I've ever been to, not to mention the amazing food they had. The Dvorak hall was for sure my favorite experience in Prague, and we had such an incredible performance. Playing in the Berlin Philharmonic concert hall was by far the most memorable experience I've ever had. The hall was so beautiful, and it had such a homey feel to it. Also, seeing the Berlin Philharmonic performing in their hall was so moving. I could not imagine a better place to be. Switzerland had the most beautiful countryside and sights to see by far, and Interlaken was just breathtaking. We definitely could not have ended the tour with a more energetic and fantastic performance, and it was such an honor performing with Natalia, especially in the hall Abbado conducted the orchestra with her in. I am so honored to have the position in the orchestra with you and I really look forward to working with you again in the future.

Thanks so much for everything,
Riley

NICOLE CALIGIURI, age 21:

Dear Maestro Zander,

It has been such a privilege to be a part of the BPYO/BPO family for the past 3 years. I have accumulated many memories that I will cherish and learn from throughout my life. It became evident in Juilliard pre-college the English horn was my calling, but it wasn't until being in BPYO with you that confirmed my feelings. I found that happiness and love in music that I had lost sight of for a while. With the opportunities you have given me and the incredible repertoire I have been able to learn and perform, under your direction, this profession came back to feeling like my passion rather than a chore.

This tour was incredible in so many ways. We accomplished so much in just two weeks. Playing such demanding repertoire so beautifully and technically well in the Berlin Philharmonie is something I will never forget. The standing ovation reminded me of our performance of Mahler 2 in Symphony Hall. For me, the best part was our playing and how high our caliber level was for every performance no matter how exhausted we all were. The landscapes were out of this world in Switzerland and created memories that will last a lifetime.

You created an environment that let me learn an extremely valuable lesson. The most important aspect of life is happiness within yourself. The most genuine happiness is when you are content

with your own life choices and do not need the approval of others to create your happiness. I still attend my conservatory for oboe but am able to put more time and effort in the instrument I love, English horn.

Much love,
Nicole

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ELMER CHARUMPI, age 19:

For: Maestro Zander
From: Elmer ☺

I'm really happy and thankful. This tour was like a dream from me, playing in Europe in famous concert halls was amazing. I'm so lucky to be part of this orchestra. I learned so many things during tour. I enjoyed every day in the tour, and also I was really happy playing for Europeans. Every time I play a concert I pray and also I think that I'm representing my country, also I always imagine that my family is in the audience. Every time I'm in a concert I imagine seeing my parents and sisters smiling at me. I miss my family so much. Can't wait to go back home and tell them all the stories that I had in this tour. Thank you, Maestro, thank you for all your help. My family is really poor, but we have a rich heart. I wish some day my family can see me in a concert in Europe or USA. I'm really excited that I will come back next year. Thanks to your friends that are going to help me. I'm really lucky, really lucky. I will pay everything back when I get famous. Thank you Maestro. GOD BLESS YOU.

Elmer

MAX TAN, age 21:

Mr. Zander,

Yesterday, you gave us an assignment to write a white sheet before the end of tour to reflect on our past experiences. I think it's not so hard to figure out what it is that we have been given - a tour in which students are free from financial burden, with concerts in the most remarkable concert halls in the world, with programs that stretch the mental and physical endurance and capability to the boundary. For me, this is not just a time to reflect on the tour, but also to look back at my time in BPYO. Last night on the bus, I began to think about what I could say and write, and I feel it is something many other musicians feel as well.

When I came to Boston four years ago, I was naive and clueless to how the world worked as a whole. I had no interest in the politics or economics of society, and I've come to see that all things, in music or in science, are heavily dependent on bureaucratic measures or some other restrictions.

What I have come to realize is that the beautiful things that we experience, as in BPYO, are possible because of the individual beliefs and commitments we make to an ideal that we envision. I am so incredibly proud to be a part of BPYO for many reasons, the most important of which is that it is probably one of the three most defining musical commitments I have had throughout college that has kept music as a strong, important, and everlasting part of my life.

A few years after I arrived at NEC Prep as a teenager, my parents had questioned their investment in the long travel to a music program on weekends. As immigrants who risked so much to gain an American education, my parents' vision for me was to become a doctor or a lawyer, some profession in which the economic situation for supporting a family would provide a much more comfortable lifestyle than what my parents could offer. When arriving at college decisions, they were vehemently against applying to any conservatories. Even at graduate school level, they were strictly forbidding any musical endeavors unless I took a medical school entrance exam to keep that option open. I was not allowed to take lessons, and the mechanism was financial repercussions; luckily, Harvard had a relatively supportive lesson subsidy program. Not to mention, the schoolwork made it extremely difficult to choose music or academics; there simply aren't enough hours in the day to do both well.

BPYO on Saturdays were a beautiful time because I could travel outside of Cambridge and engage with others around Boston, temporarily forget the worries from school and spend a few hours thinking about honing artistry and musical craft. The experiences have shaped me as a person, and I think, therefore, as a more understanding artist. By that, I mean the ability to practice live cooperation with others and to engage in something so powerfully deep and soulful. It is a spiritual experience that one seldom finds elsewhere.

I am also very proud to be a part of an institution that has come such a long way. Tonight, in Lucerne for our final concert, I am envisioning an experience that is great not because we play together perfectly and technically and not because we follow every cue and every direction (which we should), but to find at the end of 8 concerts a certain freedom of spontaneity and artistry within the boundaries. The concert last night in Basel was incredibly touching for me because despite the few minuscule mishaps, we were recovering as a whole by listening and responding, looking at each other and sharing moments of wonder, wordless expressions, and smiles. I hope tonight, we can achieve a greater sense of freedom and respond as a collective organism, not worried or anxious about the technique, but to discover even more moments of companionship in the music and rhythms, and to envision something greater by asking the question - what is the sound (as a whole) of the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra that we leave impressed upon Europe? That we have built? That has come together at the end of a remarkable 17 days together? We are 120 musicians but we are a single entity from Boston as a cultural heartbeat of the city where a different world across the Atlantic began.

Specifically to this tour, I am extremely moved by the experiences of seeing where a lot of the great Classical repertory comes from. It has changed me to see so much beauty and inspired me to find more ways to describe that beauty in sound. I have fallen in love with Europe, and I have fallen in love with music even more. I am sure tonight's Elgar will be accompanied by many tears of sadness and joy. I wish that the end of this tour is the beginning of a journey in which everything we have gained can be continued further in every avenue of work we do afterwards.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if the whole world could be in such harmony if we all paid attention to the small things of one another, friends and strangers, as we do in music? Please know that my experiences in this organization in the past 3 years have changed me in many ways and saved me musically, and that means the world to me.

Thank you.
Max

JONAH ELLSWORTH, age 21:

Somehow things come together. It feels for so long that everything is going off track and the group will not succeed like we should. And then amazing things happen. I couldn't believe the hall in Lucerne today. The concert in Berlin was out of this world. Natalia Gutman showed how she is one of the greatest cellists ever. The people in this organization are incredible. There is so much positivity and we all really respect our conductor, which is crucial. I know that BPYO will have an incredible year next season. I can't wait to see videos and photos. This was an extremely gratifying year playing in BPYO. I've learned a lot, and I love so many people in the orchestra.

Love,
Jonah Ellsworth

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MICHELLE TAN, age 17:

There are many things that I will take away from this tour and apply in my life. You may remember that at my audition I told you that next year I'm going to be captain of the girls' robotics team and also of the chess team at my school. I've observed along the tour how great, seemingly impossible things happen. This is good, since most of my goals and plans are the seemingly impossible kind. I've learned how to inspire people through passion, spirit, and love and how to enroll them, which will be a powerful tool.

After the 3rd year of being in BPYO, I feel like I'm starting to "get" this possibility thing and I like it!

From
Michelle Tan

HENRY AYANNA, age 11:

Dear Mr. Zander,

The experiences of the tour led to many takeaways. Playing concerts in about two weeks gave me a taste of what a professional orchestra tour would be like, but also I learned that you can

make friends of people twice my age. I learned so many things and gained so many experiences from this tour. I have expanded my German, performed in the Philharmonie and the Luzern Festival Hall, and I actually played the giant games of chess they have in the streets of Bern. This tour to the Czech Republic, Switzerland, and Germany was one of the best experiences of my life, I am eternally grateful for this tour and its creators, and will remember it as long as I live.

Henry Ayanna

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KATIE VELASQUEZ, age 21:

Dear Mr. Zander,

I cannot thank you enough for letting me be a part of BPYO this year... it has completely changed so many aspects of my life. I am so thankful you have been so willing to work with me all year, between school conflicts, auditions, and many others. I understand the incredible difficulty this has caused so many of the BPYO staff, and I am more than grateful that I was able to experience this year and the tour with this special group. I will forever remember the fluties from this year as my little sisters. I love them all dearly and can't wait to one day see them again. On this tour, I have been exposed to so many majesties and wonders in the world, there is no possible way to convey my thanks. The mountains here in Switzerland are among the most beautiful things I've ever seen. I've met so many friends and become closer to so many others, I feel as though I've changed as a person after being here. The musical experience is obviously the best I've ever been with – Daphnis has been such a learning experience for me as it is a work I will be playing my whole life. I am so grateful to have had the chance to work on this rep with such an amazing group. My peers inspire me every time I hear them – Nicole, Jonah, Hunter, Hayley, and many others. I hope I can find an orchestra like this one in LA. Until then, I won't soon forget BPYO.

Much love,
Katie Valasquez

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ENYA TRUONG, age 17:

Dear Mr. Zander,

This tour was absolutely amazing to say the least. I met so many more people who are so talented and so creative, and being able to play every day with these people is such a huge and special opportunity. Each and every other concert was different in all the best ways, and I am sure everyone has had the opportunity to grow after each one.

I am sure I will never experience something like this any other day – the experience of playing with 120 amazing young musicians full of life and love of the music all working towards something even greater than them.

Thank you for all you have done to make this tour happen, and I hope you were able to enjoy it and learn from it as much as I did!

Enya Truong

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NATHAN GUERKINK, age 18:

Not bad for my first trip to Europe! I seriously cannot imagine a better way to have spent it. The genuine kindness that exudes from each member of BYO is one of the distinguishing elements that make the superior group. It is hard to imagine having to return home tomorrow, but the sadness is met with excitement for what the future holds for BPYO. The Nimrod variation really is the perfect piece to end on as it captures the complex mix of emotions. I think the sadness will really set in once I arrive home and realize that it is all over... until next year. Thank you so much Mr. Zander and all of the others you mentioned for giving me quite possibly the greatest experiences of my life. I know that when I am much older, I will discover the Nimrod somewhere and be reminded of the friendships, music making, personal discoveries, and good times the BPYO allowed me to have here, and I will likely cry while longing for those times. Thank you once again.

Best,
Nathan Geurkink (6/30/15)

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JULIA CHURCHILL, age 19:

Dear Mr. Zander,

I cannot thank you enough for an amazing 3 years of BPYO. I am beyond grateful for you and my father for creating such an organization that gave me unforgettable experiences.

It hurts to think about Saturdays in the future because there will never be anything that can come close to BPYO. 2:30-6:30 will feel empty.

I cannot believe all of the accomplishments of this orchestra in just 3 years. We have played in the most renowned halls in the world and played powerful, difficult repertoire. I'll never forget my first BPYO concert in Symphony Hall and the first notes of Egmont Overture. I will never forget the final notes of Bartok in Lucerne.

Playing this final concert was so powerful. I was very moved by the Dvorak. You mentioned that you would not be surprised if this is her final performance of Dvorak and I think she played it spectacularly and it was very inspiring.

Overall, this tour has created many new friendships and has given me opportunities to perform in halls that I will probably only visit in the future, not play in.

Thank you for everything!!

Love you.
Julia Churchill

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NEIL MCNULTY, age 19:

Words really cannot describe my experience on this tour. All I can really say is that it has affirmed that I have chosen the right path in being a career musician. Music is truly the most important aspect of my life, and I'm glad that it is. I have met many people who I would like to stay in contact with for the rest of my life. While I am not a "full time" member of the orchestra, I will absolutely be auditioning in the fall so I can make this feeling last. Thank you for one of the best experiences of my life.

Neil McNulty

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EMMA CHURCHILL, age 19:

Dear Mr. Zander,

I want to start off by saying thank you. I know I didn't say it enough throughout the tour, but I am so grateful for the amazing opportunities you gave us on this tour. Playing in the Berlin Phil and Luzern and Dvorak Hall, among the others, are experiences I will never forget. Going to see all the beautiful places was completely life-changing. I have completely fallen in love with Switzerland and I'm so glad the first time I visited the beautiful country was with BPYO. I didn't think another tour could be even remotely as amazing as the Netherlands, but I was mistaken. What I truly love about these tours is ending the concert and seeing so many shining eyes, not only in the orchestra, but the audience as well. I think it's an indescribable experience bringing our love and passion for music around to different countries, and watching audiences' reactions.

Lastly, I'm so glad this is how I ended my BPYO experience. Today in Luzern, I was sitting backstage, and began tearing up, watching all the chaos around me and realizing my time with BPYO has come to an end. It's been an amazing 3 years and I'm forever grateful I decided to join. It's been completely life-changing and you made me realize my love for music and that I wanted to pursue music in college.

Thank you, thank you, thank you. <3

Much love,
Emma Churchill

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ESTHER PAK, age 16:

June 30, 2015

Dear Mr. Zander,

It's me. The girl you know as the last chair in the second violins at YPO. Look at where I'm at now. This is the definition of possibility.

You are a person who radiates possibility. Positivity, love, and joy are 3 amazing things you overflow with. Your passion for shaping leaders and creating a brighter and better future remind me that every day is a chance to live with possibility. There is no way to describe how grateful I am.

This tour has been an experience I will never forget and will cherish for the 1000 years. At the young age of 16 I can say I've been to the world's most amazing and beautiful cities. At the young age of 16, I can say that I have contributed to changing the lives of thousands. This tour has taught me numerous lessons. Every day I will challenge the negativity in life, known as the downwards spiral and will change my view to use it as a learning experience. A world of possibility is a beautiful world. One day, I dream of a world where punishment is not an option and instead, the search for possibility and new beginnings will be put into use.

I am eternally grateful and powerfully moved to be working with such amazing musicians and breath-taking people. Thank you Jonah for the passion and beauty you radiate while playing that has taught me what I am capable of. Thank you Euna for being an amazing friend who made each and every Saturday rehearsal enjoyable. Thank you to my amazing sister, Eunice, for beginning this journey with me. Thank you Hikaru for your guidance and willingness that has massively helped the section. Thank you everyone for giving me an amazing opportunity. You are all amazing and incredible people. Lastly, thank you Elisabeth. Without you, tour would not be a possibility. You have shown me that with hope and love, anything can be achieved. Thank you BPYO.

With love,
Esther Pak

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ISABEL OLIART, age 19:

This tour was an amazing experience. I met a lot of great people and saw a lot of wonderful things. I learned a lot about myself through interacting with people and traveling to different places. I love everyone in this orchestra and I love playing with them – it is a great thing for me to be able to play with and become friends with so many great people, and to be able to travel to Europe with them makes me very happy. I've loved this tour because it's shown me how great it is to travel and learn while playing music with people. I will treasure this experience for a very long time.

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MELISSA CHENG, age 19:

Dear Mr. Zander,

First of all I just want to thank you so much for all the hard work you and your staff have done to pull off this incredible tour. Never did I ever dream that I would have this opportunity to go to the Czech Republic, Germany, and Switzerland. It wasn't just great to see these great places, but experience the culture through attending concerts like the Berlin Philharmonic, playing in amazing halls, and sightseeing in the cities.

I was at first a bit nervous about coming on tour because I did not know too many orchestra members. All I looked forward to was getting to play amazing music in the halls and visiting the cities. However as I began talking and meeting more and more people I saw how genuine and friendly everyone was. Not only are these all great musicians but everyone has such a great personality and character. I remember before in rehearsals looking around and not knowing anyone except the other flutes. But at the second rehearsal in Prague, I remember looking around me and seeing familiar faces, faces of people I had just met, but I knew I would treasure the friendships forever. It was a wonderful feeling to be playing and making music with such wonderful friends; no longer strangers. I felt afterwards there was a much stronger connection in the playing of the orchestra because of all the wonderful friendships made.

I also just want to say that I have loved every minute of playing with Katie and Lily in the flute section. They are such incredible musicians and friends. I have learned so much from their playing and I am going to miss them a lot. There are so many other incredible players in this orchestra that I could name.

So thank you again for giving us all such wonderful opportunities. Even though there were maybe times of tension and stress, in the end all that we do is for the same purpose of creating beautiful and passionate music.

Sincerely,
Melissa Cheng

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KAI ROCKE, age 20:

This tour has been one of the most musical and definitely one of the most fun experiences of my entire life. I had the opportunity to make many new friends like Megan, Charles, Rei, Rebecca, Courtney, Lisa, Teresa, Neil, and definitely way more.

This was my first time out of the country and actually off of the east coast where I've been my whole life. It has been such an inspiration and invigorating to me to see the Alps outside of my window, to see the different styles of architecture and to hear languages I would never have come across easily living in Boston and Virginia.

I'm so grateful for every moment on this tour and I will cherish the beautiful music making, the interesting exchanges between the chaperones and students, and I won't forget any of it. I hope that I'll have opportunities to play with these musicians again.

I'm writing this fresh in hopes that the emotions that I'm feeling don't get lost and that I will cherish this opportunity that BPYO provided forever and ever. Thank you!

Sincerely,
Kai Rocke

KENT HISADA, age 17:

Dear Mr. Zander,

I would like to say thank you for everything and I can say it was a great year. This tour was really one of the greatest experiences in my life. The schedule was sometimes too tight that I couldn't handle it first few days yet I had really fun. In fact it was amazing tour.

The reason I didn't audition for next year is because when I think of next year, I'm gonna be really busy and I don't think I would be able to handle all the stuff that I need to do.

But today Mr. Churchill came up to me and told me I should come back to BPYO next year. At this point I can't really decide whether I should come back or not unless I talk to my parents. So if you don't mind I would like to email you when I get back and tell you about next year. I hope it isn't too late to do that.

Whether I come back or not, again thank you for everything.
And sorry for my bad English.

Kent Hisada

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MINYUNG SUH, age 16:

Dear Mr. Zander,

I don't know how to start this letter but to thank you for showing me and presenting me the opportunity to partake in the world of possibility. You are a great man, Mr. Zander; Abraham Lincoln once said a man's character is not revealed in the time of adversity, but when he has power. You have a lot of authority, but you lead this group with perfect grace. Not only do you fix things, you create opportunities and carry out your amazing vision; this tour is the greatest testimony of your astounding character. This was my first tour and my first time in the three beautiful, breath-taking countries. Personally, I would've never imagined traveling to Europe due to financial restrictions, but I now recognize and am astounded by the world of enabling possibility. I would've never thought to play with Natalia Gutman in two of the world's greatest

halls, the Philharmonie and tonight in Luzern, to receive standing ovations. You cannot imagine the joy and love and power I have felt after seeing Natalia smile and laugh. It was so beautiful. It is a great privilege to play with the last great Russian Soviet musician. She played her heart out and it was an unforgettable experience to hear everything she's been through in the Dvorak. The memory of playing the Nimrod at the Philharmonie also resounds very deeply in me. I mean, what high school kid gets to play in the home of the world's greatest orchestra? I see now this is only a glimpse in the world of possibility. During that concert, after every piece, I made eye contact with an elderly woman in the audience. Mr. Zander, her eyes sparkled and they were shining because of the music we played, because of the world of possibility. I couldn't help but smile back. I see now the joy in possibility, to share and empower others. I felt such joy and pride that I was able to share and express my love of music. I was simply delighted when I saw the impact it had. I love Simon Rattle's and Brahms's quote about practicing an hour less to read a book. There is so much life, spirit, love, power and honor in our music. Thank you for enabling me to be a part of this. My eyes have been opened. I know I will never see things the same. Now I know it is my turn, to empower others and lead them into this amazing world of possibility, to share the best of what I have so that they will one day do the same, to make the world a different but better place. Yes, thank you once again, Mr. Zander, for being a man of possibility.

With much love,
Minyung Suh

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FAYE YANG, age 17:

Dear Mr. Zander,

After being on tour so long, it feels foreign to be writing! I honestly do not have much to say about tour, rather I have a few points that sum up what tour has done for me. What I gained the most from tour are the friendships of my fellow peers. Making friends and relationships with others used to be incredibly difficult for me. Even in the first year of BPYO, I had never talked to anyone until significantly later in the year and into the Netherlands tour. Being silent was easy for me because I thought nobody wanted to hear what I had to say. However, through each assignment each week and seeing others striving to practice possibility, I began opening up, first to my stand partner, and then to everyone else in the orchestra. This tour has given me a chance to expand my horizons, meet new people and form bonds and friendships with them that will surely last into the future. Before BPYO, I could hardly imagine myself being the person I am today. From the beginning of BPYO to the 2nd tour, I've changed incredibly for the good, and I can say for sure that I'm on the track of spreading love and passion through my music making to others. I can still remember walking through the front door of your house for my first BPYO audition, playing Bach's 3rd partita and Bruch's 1st violin concerto, and hearing you tell me that I play for myself while I should play for others. These words have stuck with me till this day and I believe will continue to stay with me forever in my musical ventures.

Thank you.
Cheers to a great tour of possibility!

Love,
Faye Yang

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NATHANIEL SAVAGE, age 16:

Dear Mr. Zander,

This has been one hell of a tour. Every moment has been so full of wonder, beauty, and power that I find it hard to even comprehend, much less try to describe it in a letter, but I'll try anyway. It has been a great pleasure being part of this orchestra, part of this tour, and part of the wonderful community that is the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra. Every day that I spend with this group I have learned so much about life, music, and being a leader. This tour has provided me with a new perspective on living that I will have with me for the rest of my life. I am so thankful to every single person who has helped make this orchestra something so amazing. Ms. Christensen, Mr. Churchill, Johnny, Ben Vickers, Andy, and especially you have giving me an amazing opportunity to pursue music at such a high level, and have helped me to become a stronger person through the power of possibility.

If anyone had told me three years ago that I would be playing the double bass with such a prestigious youth orchestra in some of the best concert halls in Europe, I would never have believed them. It is almost incomprehensible how much my life has been changed by this wonderful orchestra. These last two weeks especially have been so momentous in my musical career. I feel as if I've done everything on this tour. We played so many concerts, met so many people, and have had what seems like a million experiences which, up until now, were incomprehensible to me. I've become so much more confident in myself, and have grown a great deal as a musician. Thank you all for this perfect tour. I'll see you all next year. Until then, I will continue walking in spirit and love, and hopefully I will inspire others as much as you all have inspired me.

Sincerely,
Nathaniel Savage

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SASHA YAKUB, age 17:

Dear Mr. Zander,

This was a very eventful tour for me. I had some of the most amazing experiences imaginable, ones that I've only dreamed of – playing in Berlin, playing in Lucerne – but I was also struggling with something new, something that's never happened to me before – I had a panic attack the first two concerts each. I was also fighting them every other concert. However, they did not tarnish this wonderful, unbelievable trip for me: I can say with absolute certainty that there is no group of people as caring, as supportive, and as loving as BPYO. This is what helped me get myself together and keep playing the music I love. Thank you for a stupendous year and tour, and I cannot wait for the fall.

-Sasha Yakub

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PETE WALSH, age 21:

Dear Mr. Zander,

I want to start by thanking you for encouraging me to go on the tour. Having now experienced these 17 days I wouldn't trade these memories for anything else. Before we left you said that the memories that we make on this tour will be with us for the rest of our lives and standing on the stage during the applause after the Elgar tonight and seeing everyone in tears, both audience and orchestra, will be something I never forget. That concert along with my first BPYO concert, Mahler 2, will always be among my favorite musical experiences. BPYO manages to get such a unique response from the audience which is hard to describe but is very special and I truly treasure it.

For me personally as a musician I don't think I've had a more valuable musical experience in my life than our 4 days in Berlin. I feel that I learned more about orchestra playing, bass playing, and music making in those 4 days than I have in the past 4 years. Watching the digital concert halls is one thing but seeing the orchestra in person, seeing the orchestra rehearse, meeting with the musicians, AND playing in the hall is an experience very few people are fortunate enough to experience. So many ideas clicked in my head after spending time in Berlin.

I don't think I can say thank you to everyone involved in making this happen enough. I am so grateful for everything this orchestra has given me.

Pete Walsh

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MCKINLEY JAMES, age 18:

Dear Mr. Zander,

Thank you so much for this tour – it has been amazing. I came home from my sister's wedding and my graduation. I was very sad about leaving for the tour because it felt like I was leaving everyone – it was such a time of change. The moment I got here, I felt surrounded by love and friendship. Within a few hours of arriving (during the rehearsal) I was in an ecstatic mood, and it hasn't diminished since. I've been on a high of music and good company for 17 days, and it's going to be very hard to recover from it. Playing in the Berlin Philharmonie was a very extraordinary experience. This has been the first time that I have considered – really wanted – an orchestra career. I would love to be doing it for the rest of my life. I really loved especially the rehearsal of the Don Quixote when you described what each section of the music meant. It helped bring clarity to the music and make it mean so much more to me.

It has been such an experience – everything from seeing the home of these classical [2 indecipherable words] music, to the original score of Siegfried in the Wagner museum today. The tour seems like an enlarged process of the orchestra – to get everyone together, and to build

bonds that will last a lifetime. I have made closer friends through music – one of the biggest reasons I want to go into music professionally. The most important part of the tour was it felt like we had a message to bring with our music – of possibility – it gave the tour a purpose, and a reason to be fully passionate about the mission. Thank you so much for everything.

McKinley James

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PHILIP MCNAUGHTON, age 19:

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

BPYO is a one of a kind organization. It is not just an amazing orchestra full of world class musicians, but it is an orchestra full of the most friendly, loving, and caring people I have ever met. Playing at such a high level with some of the best people in the most amazing locations was a dream come true and I cannot thank you enough for giving me this opportunity, and being an organization that doesn't give up. This tour experience, as well as the whole year, has been an eye opening experience where I have learned so much that I will carry with me for the rest of my career.

This has been my first time to Europe and I could not have asked for a better time. The people, the places, the views, the history, the food. It will be hard for me to find an experience that beats this.

The people here are what makes this group an amazing success. Elisabeth, Mark, and you create an environment where kids believe anything is possible and to not think small. You let us run wild with our thoughts and taught us not to be afraid to make mistakes. (HOW FASCINATING!) BPYO inspires us to make it happen, whatever we want.

If I come back next year or not I know that BPYO is one of the most amazing organizations for young musicians that molded me to who I am now. This trip was amazing! And I cannot thank you enough or make this life changing trip possible. The trip from Hartford every week was worth it!

Love,
Philip McNaughton

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JUSTIN CHEESMAN, age 20:

Mr. Zander,

I simply wanted to say how much I enjoyed tonight's performance. I had forgotten what it was like to feel so much energy and excitement coming from an orchestra. I have been playing bass for ten years now, and somewhere along the way I had lost that energy. I haven't stopped

enjoying it, but I stopped becoming excited. Performing had become somewhat monotonous, and these last few performances have helped break that trend. I hope to be able to recall this feeling of energy every time I perform, so that I can guarantee that I never regret my career choice.

Sincerely,
Justin Cheesman

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HIKARU YONEZAKI, age 19:

Monday, June 29, 2015

Dear Mr. Zander,

I don't know how else to begin this letter but by thanking you for this experience. Thank you for the most unforgettable 17 days, thank you for letting us explore the world of possibility together, and thank you for the love, generosity, and kindness that you radiate every day.

Two years ago, I couldn't imagine completing a tour any more difficult – in many ways, I think this tour was more difficult. Now, I can't believe that we just finished our last of eight concerts on our 17 day tour, traveling around Europe! Having the opportunity to listen Natalia Gutman (her passion and energy shines through) and Jonah has been so inspiring. Equally inspiring have been our non-musical experiences – for example, exploring the Jewish Quarters, and talking to Richard Dyer and David St. George, to name a few.

The Jewish Quarter was one of the most moving experiences I've ever had. Going through the building with the children's paintings and the cemetery opened something in me, although I find it difficult to put to words. As I stepped into the gallery of the children's artworks, tears filled my eyes – I felt so connected to these people whom I had never known or even heard of. I left that trip feeling so grateful and happy, not only to be living, but to be living with each other and having incredible people around me. Perhaps because of this new appreciation and joy I felt, or perhaps because of some other factors in addition to that, I felt like I had let go of something that had been restricting me – I felt cleansed and completely free. Thank you for allowing me to experience something so powerful.

That's only one of the many memories that I carry with me – it amazes me to think of all the other valuable experiences. Thank you for creating this journey – thank you.

With love,
Hikaru

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MASON ADAMS, age 20:

Mr. Zander,

I must admit, I haven't written a white sheet before. But I feel that this was an experience of a lifetime and I wanted to thank you for everything. You gave me the opportunity of a lifetime and I appreciate it greatly. I made so many new friends and even though I was new to the orchestra, I really feel like I was part of the family. I am not sure how I am going to explain this to friends and family back home. The places we have been and the emotions we have felt are once in a lifetime experiences and I will never forget them. I have you and so many others to thank for such an amazing two and a half weeks. I hope to bring back the things I have learned here in Europe with BPYO and continue to grow as a musician and a human being. I will never forget meeting Stefan Schweigert and listening to the thunderous applause from each hall we performed in. There are so many people I want to talk about but I feel that I would be writing for a very very long time. One thing I would like to say though, is that I am extremely grateful for the power of music and the power of possibility and how close this has brought me to so many people in such a small amount of time. I am sitting here, watching the sun rise, with some of my new, closest friends and I cannot help but tear up because of the emotions running through my head. For as long as I live, I will never forget these amazing people and the experiences we have been through together.

Much love,
Mason Adams

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EUJIN KIM, age 14:

Thank you so much for everything. The tour has been magnificent; the concerts an absolute blast; the new acquaintances and friends near and dear to my heart; and the memories everlasting. I cannot express how grateful I am, considering I don't think I realize the full depth of it myself: I didn't even realize I was grateful until I began crying after the concert today. I am not returning next year, and then I felt the tears welling up and dripping down my face and I couldn't stop crying – I will definitely miss BPYO. I haven't exactly had the best year, for various reasons, but after this tour, I really feel a part of the orchestra and that I'll miss it. So, thank you. For the tours and concerts and people and experiences. It's an amazing experiences to be surrounded by people who love music and know so much about it, and where else than BPYO would that be?

I would like to suggest a couple practical things that I think may have enhanced the performance of the orchestra even further. I mean, I'm not sure I have either knowledge, qualifications, or any right to suggest things, but here I go anyway.

1. TEACH us and enforce and remind us about more things about being in an orchestra
 - Some things: be in same part of bow as principal, QUIET page turns, put your instrument up/down as the principal does, you should not/need not be hear in the *ppp* parts (if you can't hear your partner, you're far too loud)
2. Encourage more interaction between older and younger kids, and *not* just on tour
 - I didn't know 9/10 of the orchestra before this tour
3. Spend more time explaining the music
 - I sometimes desperately want to better understand a piece but am unable to

In closing, thank you again for a wonderful tour, and I wish you all the best for next year!

Thank you, and good-bye,
Eujin Kim

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AUSTEN YUEH, age 19:

Dear Mr. Zander,

THANK YOU so much for this experience – I think words can barely begin to describe how incredibly lucky and elated I feel to have been a part of this tour and orchestra, if even just for a year. This might sound cheesy or exaggerated, but it's been truly life changing – not only in the fantastic sights and sounds we've gotten to see/hear, but in finally making me realize that I want to commit to music.

You might remember I came into this orchestra as an MIT student who wanted a musical experience better than my school's to become part of my life. I leave this orchestra having played in some of the most beautiful, historic halls, and having re-discovered the joy of making music with so many talented, kind, devoted peers, and with the conviction that I cannot say good-bye to a life of music. I cannot imagine going back to my corporate tech job after this, or MIT, as the same person I was before, for I have newfound inspiration to keep sharing music with everyone I meet and everywhere. In short, I'll be aiming to take master's music/grad diploma auditions after finishing MIT.

This tour would not have been the amazing experience it was without the people. I only wish we had all been friends and had so much time to spend with each other earlier in the year – Charles, Sarah, Natsumi, Melissa, Julia Park, Pei, and I had the best time today reading a Ravel chamber piece, and I can't remember the last time I had a chance like that. Stanford, my chaperone, gave me the final push and advice I needed to know I should go into music after graduating MIT. Elmer has been so incredibly fun to listen to and listen to music with, as well as practice my Spanish!

And I cannot forget to mention the most supportive clarinet section I've had the pleasure of playing in. Hunter exhibited incredible leadership in both suggesting and listening to me during our Dvorak, and he truly made us a team. His future second clarinet players are all very lucky people. ☺ He and Dustin were both very humble and helpful even despite their seniority. Joe, Diego, Dustin, and I had a wonderful time busking in the streets of Prague, and I'll never forget that. All in all, I really look forward to continued music making and friendships back in Boston come fall.

I do have a small suggestion regarding assignment of parts not just for the tour, but the whole year – unlike brass assistant roles, woodwind assistant roles do not offer much opportunity to play or learn and often only inhibit the music more than serve it. It would show much more respect for the person's time, and help the music as well, to omit the woodwind assistant role entirely, particularly if another student will be called in to play the principal role when the

original principal cannot make the performances. (I think Dustin is absolutely fabulous and he's so fun to be around, but I did feel that my role in the Bartok was essentially meaningless.) I have a lot more feelings that can't be done justice in words on this sheet, but suffice it to say that this tour, and you and the staff who made it happen, will remain eternally in my heart with nostalgia and gratitude. This is beyond my wildest dream of what I could hope for when I committed to MIT, and it's all thanks to you.

Best wishes, and take care.
Austen Yueh

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COURTNEY CHANG, age 21:

Dear Mr. Zander,
I've been thinking about the impact that this tour has had on me and can say with confidence that this is the most meaningful thing I have done in my life. I am exhausted. Though exhausted, this is also one of the happiest times I can remember. I'm grateful for so many moments that I've experienced – playing in some of the world's greatest halls, meeting some of the world's greatest musicians, and playing and listening to great music. When I heard Patricia Kopatchinskaja play for us, I could have cried right on the stage in Bern. I keep revisiting the quote that Maestro Simon Rattle left us with about how music is all about the human experience. I think that BPYO is a perfect example of that. I could have been perfectly content with just rehearsing and performing with this group in Boston, but being able to travel the world with them and share this music with people across these countries made it far more enriching. Not only did we touch the hearts of our audiences, but we grew musically and emotionally with each concert. I'll never forget the faces of the audiences and our orchestra members when they look at Jonah play, or how people would wipe the tears from their eyes as they applauded us. These are the things that make the hours of practice worthwhile. I want to thank you and everyone else on the BPYO team for making all of this possible – Whenever I told my friends or family about this tour, they couldn't believe that a group like us could achieve this. Now that it's all over, I look back on this experience and I can barely believe it myself.

With love,
Courtney

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DANIEL CETLIN, age 16:

Dear Mr. Zander,
I am not quite sure where to begin with this letter because I have taken away so much from this tour. The final chord of the Nimrod struck me with more emotion throughout the 8 concerts until finally on the final concert, I cried. Me crying not only represents my sadness for saying good-bye to many friends in BPYO, some of whom I met 3 years ago, but it represents my growth as an individual as a result of the tour. I have not experienced more transitions from the downward spiral to possibility than in these two weeks. What appeared to me as disillusionment and

discouragement at first turned into pure glee and amazement over and over again. Experiencing so many cities for the first time was the catalyst for many of my transformations. The beauty of the cultures and energies present in each city reminded me again and again what makes us so special. Our orchestra consists of around 120 different people from different ethnicities, cultures, and religions, yet we all play harmoniously and become the whole. Each city had so much to offer me just like how each player has so much to offer the orchestra. Each new experience allowed me to grow as an individual because I was constantly appreciating the beauty of each city. In my daily life everything is a routine and it is easy to not appreciate the inner and outer beauties. What this tour has taught me is that every experience in life has something to offer us. The chord at the end of Nimrod consisted of the same notes in each concert, yet I appreciated the emotion behind the chord more with its repetition. I could praise what this tour has done for me musically and emotionally for an endless amount of time but there is no need to write a novel. This has been the most satisfying two weeks of my life, and I could not thank you enough. I can't wait to return to our orchestra routine and meet so many new people. Thank you for changing my life again and again!

Love,
Daniel Cetlin

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MARKIE AMADEI, age 18:

When applying for a BPYO audition I was not expecting the email I received. I actually thought it was a joke. Practically a free tour to Europe with a great orchestra? Unreal! Although I had a small musical role, I'm very grateful and blessed to have been a part of this group. And to have been given this amazing experience. Although I can't remember all 120 of these new names, the ones I have remembered mean the world to me. These people are incredible. It is truly inspiring to be surrounded by 120 people all fighting and working for perfection with their music and life. This trip has helped me close one chapter and start another. It closed my high school life, and has inspired me and given me a vision for what I want to work toward in college. The beauty in all these cities and countries and cultures has taught/told me that I need to, and I can, find this incredible in my own home in Maine. Although I have acquired 2 teaching jobs on Saturdays in the fall, I hope I can still somehow be a part of this orchestra and amazing group. This tour has lit a fire in my spirit, and I'm positive that it will continue to burn as I go into my college music career, working towards this endless goal of perfection. This trip has also given me a taste of how amazing and how powerful world traveling is. The importance of experiencing new cultures and situations.

I'm incredibly grateful, and I'm not sure how to say thank you enough. I truly hope to continue with this remarkable program. Please stay in touch.

Markie Amadei

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LAURA DYNES, age 17:

Sometime between Monday 29 June and Tuesday 30 June

Mr. Zander,

Allow me to tell you a story.

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Once upon a time, there was a girl. Let us call her Nora Lines. Nora was trapped in a world full of steps and judgments and whispers and competition. (She also quite often fell asleep in her orchestra rehearsals.) But then, one day, she was given the chance to take a break from that world in a building by a water wheel. (I think. Can't remember.) There, she met this amazing man with a brilliant shock of hair and the most enthusiasm she had ever seen. Let's call him Mr. Bander.

Mr. Bander was very welcoming and he spoke of a magical yet completely attainable realm of **POSSIBILITY**. Nora was intrigued and very excited to take part. Subsequently, she joined Mr. Bander's brand new orchestra (the BPYO, shall we say). And she started on the journey of a lifetime.

That first year, every Saturday was the highlight of her week. She joined in at LMIT (okay, sure) with 119 other young musicians, aged 12-21 and played incredible music: Strauss, Mahler, Elgar. She fell in love with music again and saw life beyond comparisons. Nora and her 119 fellow musicians played to prove themselves and played to spread **possibility**. Nora could hardly believe Mr. Bander had allowed her this incredible opportunity! Simply being in the room was better than she could ever imagine.

But then, it got even better.

Mr. Bander had done the unthinkable and was bringing the BPYO on tour to Holland! Its very first year! And they were playing in the Concertgebouw! (Holy s**t!) And there was much gasping and wowing to be heard throughout the 1/3 scale model of Symphony Hall in LMIT. Who would've though! And with only 4 chaperones.

So Nora went with her friends and had the time of her life. She learned so much on that tour, from music to culture to exactly how little sleep she could function on. So much of that trip stays with her as she goes through life even though she has trouble remembering her age. (She's 15 at the time.) And Holland was beautiful and she loved traveling and Mahler 2 is still one of her favorite pieces ever.

And then tour ended and the orchestra was family and everyone cried the last night. But not Nora. She was going back to BPYO the next year.

The next year was great, too. Shostakovich, Mahler, Barber, Strauss, Ginastera, and more amazing pieces. (She absolutely adores Mahler 5 and Shost. 5 both!) And, to top it off, Mr. Bander achieved the unthinkable again! He brought BPYO to Carnegie Hall in New York City! With 4 chaperons! Holy crap! How does the man do it?

And Nora had the time of her life playing such a brilliant orchestra hall and wandering around the city with her friends. And she thanked Mr. Bander with all of her soul for letting her in that first year. And they finished the year playing Don Quixote with the astounding Noah Bellsworth. And people cried. But not Nora. For she was going back next year.

And so we come to Nora Lynes's third year with Mr. Bander and the PBYO. It would also be her final as she would be attending college in the fall. And this year was magnificent. Shostakovich, Dvorak with Natalia Gutman, Bartok, Schoenberg, many amazing concertos played by her peers, Ravel. Wagner's Siegfried. OH MY GOD. This year was incredible! Nora enjoyed every rehearsal and adored every concert. She grew immensely as a person and a musician under Mr. Bander's instruction. (This was despite the fact that she sometimes thought he was mental for trying to play all of the stuff.) And she was so so so thankful he had let her in that first year. Because she couldn't imagine her life without it, it had changed her so much for the better. But Mr. Bander's gifts didn't stop there. Once more he had pulled off the unthinkable. He was bringing PBYO on a 17 day tour to Europe. 3 countries. 8 concerts. 120 musicians. 4 chaperones. And Nora had the time of her life. She met at least 40 new people. She played so many of her favorite pieces (she really adores the Ravel) for so long with so many amazing people in so many wondrous places. And she thanked Mr. Bander so many times for letting her in that first year. Because it led to all this.

And on the last night, the last concert in Luzern, people cried. Nora cried as well. Because she was about to leave her family and home of three years. And she would come back to visit but it wouldn't be the same. Later that night, as Nora sat down to write on three years of experiences, she realized that there was absolutely no way she could do it. Because three years of incredible experiences is several lifetimes too much for words to even try to describe.

What I guess I'm trying to say is thank you for letting me in that first year.

The second movement of Dvorak sounds like heaven. And to be able to listen to heaven played every night, live by incredible musicians, is more than I could ever ask for. I have no idea if I could ever repay you for all of this or where I would start. Thank you for letting me in that first year. I had the time of my life. Thank you.

Love,
Laura Dynes

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RODION BELOUSOV, age 18:

This tour has been absolutely incredible for me. So many great things happened! First of it was my first time to visit all these great countries like Czech Republic and Switzerland. I've never been in Berlin in Germany before too. I was astonished by the beauty of these countries. Every city we visited was absolutely unique in its own way. Secondly, I met so many new people, made some good friends. I never felt bored talking to other people, every person always has something very interesting to say, something that made me listen to this person and enjoy being around him. I especially want to acknowledge Sam Waring. He helped me so much during this tour. He

helped me with reed making, oboe playing, even helped me with my English! Before this tour I barely knew a few people in the orchestra, but right now I know almost everybody!

This tour helped me realize that all the things that sometimes look impossible are always possible to achieve, you just have to believe and want them to happen with all your heart. I would never imagine that at 18 years old I will play in such beautiful and famous halls that we played in this tour. Every hall has been absolutely amazing and the beauty of these halls gave me even more strength to continue playing and enjoying the music!

One other thing that happened to me during this tour is that I was able to personally meet the first oboist of the Berlin Philharmonic, Albrecht Mayer. This person has been playing in Berlin's orchestra since 1992, before I was even born! It was such a privilege for me to meet and talk with him. He even gave me his oboe to try! I will definitely never forget that moment.

There are many other great things I wanna say about this tour, I feel like it would take me more than a week to tell my parents and friends about the amazing experience I was so lucky to have! I will remember this tour for the rest of my life, thank you Mr. Zander for making it possible for me!!!

I also want to thank Elisabeth! She helped me to make a visa, she prepared all the documents for me in a very short time, and I'm so grateful to her. Without her, I would definitely not be able to come to this tour.

I'll continue walking with spirit and love and make other people inspired!!! The art of possibility forever!!!

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MIRELLA GRUESSER-SMITH, age 17:

Dear Mr. Zander,

I am happy because I have seen people be powerful. In the Bartok – in all the pieces actually – I would close my eyes and feel the waves of sound around me. The music seemed like one expression – one beautifully together whole. There was movement – intention – in the playing. I let myself play into that motion, let it carry me and played with infinitely less fear. At the end of Elgar in Interlaken and Luzern, all the players in the orchestra were as close as a group of people can be together in spirit and soul.

My depression and anxiety experiences sometimes feel so bad, so overwhelmingly confusing, I don't understand how to be alive in these moments. But in Shostakovich's Festive Overture I played for life and survival like everyone around me and got chills. I live for what happens on this tour, whether while playing music or the deep love and laughter and friendship that develops among us. God I hope this whole feeling of my heart will stay forever. My mind may carry me to the darkest most terrifying places but I'll remember where my heart was when we all played Elgar together. I have made life-long friends, gotten brilliant new perspectives on life, and had 2

of the most cathartic experiences in my life. I'm getting to know myself better. I talked to Roz which changed me. I laughed with DSG and Richard Dyer who called my celeste playing "celestial"! I am satisfied with my accomplishments in my life after that compliment. ☺ I cried really hard one day I thought I was going to die but someone came and comforted me. And often I feel more whole than ever. This tour has over and over and over shown me people's kindness and awesome hearts and capacity for beauty. Now, when I hug people, I see how hopeful, strong, and powerful people are SO MUCH MORE EASILY. And then, when they care for me, I am able to accept it easier.

Love,
Mirella

Thank you for never ever ceasing to love and help me. And for bringing me into this brilliant group of people.

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MICHELLE TAN, age 17:

Dear Mr. Zander,

What an EXTRAORDINARY tour this has been! I couldn't believe what I was hearing when you announced the tour was going to be to the Czech Republic, Germany AND Switzerland. Knowing how much effort went into the Holland tour – with the fundraising and planning and rehearsing – it was so inspiring to watch this tour come together and even thrive in the world of possibility!

Before I continue writing about my experience on tour, I just wanted to point out that during the acknowledgments, you failed to mention yourself! You are the person who has the vision to lead this orchestra in the world of possibility. I've noticed all the times you persevered and inspired. During that day with the 6 hours of rehearsal, I remember how tired we all were and I can only imagine how tired you must have been. You made a very inspiring speech about being the whole. I gained insight into how to live life as being the whole. To me, this means focusing on the whole experience instead of the individual feelings of tiredness. Being the whole is also about being everything – the great musician, the loyal friend, the rule abider, the risk-taker – being it all.

I remember at the tour meeting, you talked about breaking down hierarchical relationships. Having been with you for three years now, I've heard this talk many times throughout the years, at 1st rehearsals, at all tour meetings. I've always thought it was a lovely idea, but rarely had the courage to implement. This tour I set a private goal for myself to learn everyone's name in the orchestra. And guess what... I DID IT!

I met so many more people this tour than last tour which shows how much I've grown through BPYO. I met Charles the harpist, who is one of the most open and carefree and funny person I've met. Liz O'Neil I met – she is so direct at what she wants and very witty. I met Rei, Theresa, and James Hotchkiss, who I was surprised to learn that they shared intense interests in STEM, just

like me! I also had experiences breaking down hierarchical relationships with the adults. I've sat on the bus with Mark Churchill, who told me about his incredible involvement in the El Sistema program. I find him to be very humble in his great work. I also talked with Dave Jamrog and learned how he makes the videos of our performance. I'm still astounded that he makes them without teleportation. I've also talked to Elisabeth and I can't believe that she organized her first tour at age 19!! Wow!!

I love so many things about this tour.
I love the beautiful scenery.
I love the diverse range of people in the orchestra.
I love being a part of something amazing.
I love visiting places that have so much history.
I love how open the Europeans are.
I love it when we pass out flyers and people take them!
I love how smoothly it went.
I love the quality of the food and the housing.
I love the music we play.
I love how we grew closer as a group.
I love how we improved musically along the tour.
I love how we got to see Berlin Phil and Simon Rattle.
I love how I can't stop listing things I love.
I love how PERFECT this tour was.

This tour having been the 2nd BPYO tour I've been on, people often ask me to compare the two. This tour was more massive in size and length and experience. The one thing that did frustrate me was how people tried to take advantage and kept going off track, which I found more frequent on this tour than on the last. Although it was frustrating, it's also more realistic, I guess. I did quite a bit of flyering this tour. I went with the group to the Barenboim concert and we gave out at least 1000 flyers. I also went around before the last concert with flyers. It's during those experiences that I learned the importance of walking with spirit and love. This was difficult, but definitely the key to enrolling people, when they saw that spirit and love.

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HUNTER BENNETT, age 21:

The tour – final white sheet

Dear Mr. Zander,

Three years ago, Tom Hill paired the two of us up, and I have been grateful for that ever since. You have been the catalyst for so much opportunity for me, both musically and personally. The playing I do for you always forces me to push myself to a higher and higher level of playing. I live my life as a more positive person, and I find meaning in everything thanks to you. This tour has opened my mind, my self, my soul to things I never could have imagined. Mountains that large, people that friendly, musicians that talented, an orchestra as fantastically persevering as BPYO. Some tiny musical moments that stand out: 1) The returning timpani

excerpt from the Bartok played perfectly every time, with no sweat! 2) Watching the younger ones keep pace with the older ones in the string section during everything. 3) The 2-person bass trombone! 4) Solos played better than the best pros (I'm looking at you, Elmer, Nicole, Katie, Dustin, et al.). Wait – LILY on the piccolo!

It is difficult for me to decide what affected me more on this tour – the music or the people. The more I think about it, the more I realize the two are intrinsically linked. Music is as inherently human an activity as it gets, and it takes people as extraordinary as these in this orchestra to make music as extraordinarily as BPYO.

I know you will continue to inspire the young fold (and, secretly, you inspire us not-quite-as-young folk, but it's not "cool" to admit it), and I hope you continue to do so forever. I'm glad to have you in my life, and I thank you for another fantastic tour of possibility!

Much love,
Hunter Bennett

P.S. Seeing as this is, in fact, a white sheet, I feel obligated to let you know: The Eb clarinet solo in the Daphnis Danse Generale is a very scary entrance. Just look up and give me a wink! ☺

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HARRISON KLEIN, age 19:

Dear Mr. Zander,

I would like to first say thank you for providing all of us with this incredible opportunity. I cannot begin to describe how thankful we all are. This tour has been the most incredible experience of my life. I was able to meet an incredible amount of amazing people that I had not known personally. I have made friendships that I know will last a lifetime and musical connections that are sure to enhance my career in the future. On this tour I was also able to experience foreign culture in the most incredible ways. I touched people with our amazing music, and felt incredible resonance in the best concert halls in the world. I am confident also that this tour was the best thing I could have done for myself musically this entire summer. It has provided me with the incredible insight of playing efficiently with a possibility ensemble. The last thing I would like to say is that I am so happy to have furthered my relationship with you. This tour was the first time I was able to really connect with you on a personal level, and I thank you dearly for being there for me. I will be writing you a long email as soon as I am back in California and have been able to further reflect on this incredible trip. Thank you so much Mr. Zander.

Love,
Harrison Klein

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SARAH SIMPSON, age 18:

Dear Mr. Zander,

This tour has been the most wonderful culmination to my year in BPYO. Throughout the year I have had such a wonderful time playing with my BPYO peers (especially Katie and Hayley), learning from them and you and growing with them. This tour was no exception to this invigorating growth experience, but was also a magical two weeks infused with fun and unrelenting excitement. Getting the chance to explore Europe, to cross the Atlantic for the first time, was even more breathtaking than I could ever imagine, seeing the majestic oldness of Prague, the Jewish Quarter that moved me to tears, the Berlin Wall, and all the beautiful mountains and lakes of Switzerland truly changed my life. A highlight for me was the Berlin Phil concert, which exhibited the most extraordinary musicianship and was such a moving experience for the flutes to watch the principal's last concert. Of course, us playing in that same hall, with such an extraordinary weight of legacy upon our shoulders, completely changed my life. To me, though, each concert was special and energetic, and it was wonderful to get to play the same repertoire multiple times to strive for perfection. My favorite piece was Don Quixote, because of its amazing storytelling quality and Jonah's unbelievable playing. It was so much fun to get the chance to meet Jonah and other string players on this tour – I feel like many of the more social tensions that existed in the BFIT rehearsal space were completely melted on tour, and I got to meet so many wonderful new and exciting people who I had no sense of before this uniting experience. I will miss the dear friends I made in the orchestra on this tour (especially Katie and Hunter), but I will never forget them or the magic of this experience. Thank you and Ms. Christensen for everything.

Best,
Sarah Simpson

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NIJOMA GREVIOUS, age 15:

Thank you. Thank you so much for all that you have given me (both directly and indirectly) by taking 2 big chances on me and allowing me into this extraordinary orchestra. It is not only a privilege to be under the guidance of your "stick," as you say, but it is also a privilege to play with musicians who I consider to be at my level and much higher. I believe that it is important for young people to interact with people older than they are, and BPYO has shown me that the best way to accomplish that is through MUSIC.

This tour has honestly meant the world to me, to my family, to the classical community, to the African American community, especially. It's not every day that you see an African American female in an orchestra such as BPYO. (Although you have probably heard about this a lot, I am going to express myself anyway because this is crucial.) Going on this tour was so important because I am one of the few people who represents the community of vastly under-represented minorities in the world of classical music. As you may or may not know, this has been an especially difficult year for the African American community. You have the Baltimore riots in response to Eric Grey, Ferguson, the reverend and all of those in the predominantly black church that was bombed 2 weeks ago. My whole family and Project STEP and Winsor music were all so

proud and happy for me to have been able to go on this amazing tour. My mom has told me many times before that my being part of the classical music world is vital for breaking down silly stereotypes on people who have historically been portrayed and treated as aliens, etc. To see my mom send me off into Europe to BE THE WHOLE (of my community) is a feeling that I will one day feel when I send my child(ren) off into the world to spread awareness, start a new revolution, and change the worldwide view over one group of people.

I have probably written to you about how hard it has been for me over the years to gain confidence and make friends. Over this whole tour, I have been able to voice my opinions in controversial arguments, play like a leader in the 2nd violin section, and meet many amazing people. Sadly, now we have to say good-bye. I've never been more sad to leave an adventure full of people whom I love (even if I don't know them) than I am right now. I really felt a shock of pain shoot into my chest when we played the last note of Nimrod, and I began to realize that the concert tonight was actually the last concert. The most touching moment during the performance tonight was when I looked over at Nicholas Gallitano and saw him sobbing. I don't know what it is. I've known Nick for 3 years, but I never really had the chance to become close with him. Anyway, seeing a good-hearted, strong, talented, and kind person crying was the most heart-warming, painful, and beautiful thing I have ever seen. Seeing him cry made me understand how important the friendships we have created and will continue to make in the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra are.

Emily Chen. You were right when you called her the most caring person in this orchestra. After the concert today, I saw Emily and she was crying. We hadn't been stand partners for a year, but when I saw her crying, I began to cry as well. I don't know what it is. There is something that Emily and I have that is just so raw, beautiful, and special. When I initially fell into her and Emily was crying while saying, in an incoherent way, "I miss you so much. When we were playing, all I was thinking about was you." I have nothing else to say, but "Me too."

More specifically now:

- 1) Playing with Natalia Gutman has been so rewarding
- 2) Playing with JONAH has also been rewarding (He is outstanding) – seeing the 2 different generations perform back to back is so special.
- 3) Performing in the Berlin Philharmonie – something that will forever rest in my heart
- 4) All of our guided tours – It's great to play music in other countries, but actually being able to walk around and learn about the country makes the music all the better
- 5) Watching audience members' faces light up at the end of a piece or the concert
- 6) Eating deliciously expensive food
- 7) Meeting new people! – meeting the students from the conservatory was very fun. It's definitely interesting to see the differences between ours and theirs.
 - Meeting members of the BPYO: Ex: Yesterday when we met with the Basel Conservatory students, after the Basel students went inside to watch the TED talk, 2 big groups of strings, including Ray the cellist, sat with Charles and Joe, the clarinetist. We had a really fun time and we all wished that we had met up earlier.
- 8) Playing concerts all of the time. I LOVE PERFORMING.

- 9) Waking up knowing that I could see and get to play with some of the most well-rounded and talented people that I know.

To end this white sheet (even though I can write much more):

Over this European tour, I have learned a lot about independence and leadership. I've learned that it is okay to separate myself from the "15" year old clique and at the end of tour, I have learned to be a leader within that group and use those skills in the real world.

Thank you Mr. Zander. Thank you Mr. Churchill. Thank you Ms. Christensen. Thank you chaperones. Thank you Germany, Switzerland, and the Czech Republic. Thank you BPYO for giving me another tale to tell.

Love, Nijoma Grevious

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DIEGO BACIGALUPE, age 18:

Dear Mr. Zander,

Wow. This tour has been the most fulfilling experience of my life. From the first notes in Smetana Hall to the brilliant finale and Nimrod in Lucerne. There have been amazing moments. I can't believe we finally nailed the Ravel and it's going to be a recording. The piece was the most difficult piece I have ever played in a large ensemble and to finally make it click in performance is amazing. We clarinets can spend out entire lives learning to perfect the Ravel, and maybe our performances weren't perfect but they were absolutely stunning and electrifying. It's a privilege to play Daphnis, Bartok, and Don Quixote in any orchestra, let alone a youth orchestra on tour in Europe. This is why I love music. I'm going to cherish the memories from this tour for the rest of my life. One thing I found initially frustrating on this tour was your at times excessive speaking before each piece in the concerts. But yesterday when you spoke at the conservatory you changed my mind in that now I'm the type of person who believes music benefits from explanation. I think that's a reason why audiences have responded so well to our playing. When professional orchestras tour, or just give concerts in general, there's no commentary and the music has to speak for itself. Sometimes it does, but for the average listener, context is absolutely necessary. I can't wait to come back next year. Being a non-music major and playing in BPYO will be difficult but I will do everything in my power to balance music into my life because I don't see myself ever giving it up. Thank you for everything you've created. Words cannot describe the gratitude I feel.

Love,
Diego Bacigalupe

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JULIA WELLS, age 19:

Dear Mr. Zander,

First of all, I just wanted to say thank you. This tour has been some of the greatest days of my life and I'll never forget everything we've done and all the incredibly powerful music we've played. The word that comes to mind first when I think of this tour is inspiring. I've been inspired by the beautiful halls we've played in and the musical history of the places we've visited and the beauty at the cities we went to. I've been inspired by the responses of our audiences. But most importantly, I've been inspired by the musicians I've gotten to know over the past 2 weeks. Hearing Natalia Gutman play Bach completely changed the way I think about phrasing and playing music. Playing in the same orchestra as people who put as much passion into every note they play has changed the way I think about my own role in an orchestra. I've also been inspired by so many of the younger kids on this tour – when I was their age I would never have appreciated playing in the hall in Lucerne where Abbado conducted or visiting the café where Schumann had his regular table. They remind me how universal music is and inspire me to push myself as far as they have. I'll never forget hearing the Berlin Philharmonic and listening to Simon Rattle talk about music. I'll never forget the thrill of playing the last note of the Bartok or the beauty of the wind playing in the second movement of the Dvorak. I'm really not sure where I'm headed in life after college and where I am with continuing to pursue music, but this tour has given me so much to look back on whenever I need to remember why I practice every day or when I think of giving up because I'm not good enough. The experience was incredible, and although I'm sad it can't last forever, I know that what I've learned will, and for that I cannot thank you enough and everyone in this orchestra enough.

Sincerely,
Julia Wells

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CHARLES OVERTON, age 20:

Dear Mr. Zander,

I can't even begin to express to you in words what these last two years in BPYO and especially this tour have meant to me. In addition to the extremely high level of music making, I've made meaningful relationships and learned and grown more than I ever have in any other artistic experience. In the lessons you assign every week and in your talks regarding possibility I have been able to glean little gems that have helped me to start having a different, and generally more positive outlook on life. Perhaps most meaningful to me has been your suggestion to start each day by saying to yourself: "I am a contribution." Since moving to Boston and starting to balance my pursuits in both jazz and classical music, I have been struggling with feelings of not belonging, or inadequacy, just generally lacking a sense of belonging, but when I try to live my life as a contribution I feel that these feelings evaporate, and additionally BPYO has been an irreplaceable, amazing community full of supportive people that I will surely not forget. I would really just like to thank you so much for the opportunity that is BPYO and I hope that I will be able to make music again with you sometime in the future!

Charles Overton

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TERESA LIN, age 21:

Dear Mr. Zander,

Tonight, our last night of tour, was a very moving night for me. The concert itself went superbly – I’ve never been so moved by the Dvorak Cello Concerto as tonight when Natalia played it – and it was the best and my favorite concert I’ve played in. I will remember it for as long as my memory holds – the way we ended the Shostakovich, Natalia’s exquisite playing, the bass section at the beginning of the Bartok, the power and passion I felt playing the viola section solo in the 3rd movement of the Bartok... and the list goes on. As we played the Elgar, I thought of this entire year’s experience and the experiences through tour. I am so happy that I decided to submit an audition tape even though I was overseas in the UK. Through BPYO rehearsals and the tour, I’ve had the opportunity to play the most heartfelt music and meet the most inspiring people. I didn’t know very many people before tour started, but something about traveling together abroad and spending so much time together just brings people together. I have been awed by everyone I’ve met on this tour – Elmer’s amazing playing and his equally amazing modesty and groundedness, Jon’s story of how he became a percussionist, the clarinet section’s dedication to busking on the streets and spreading the word, etc. The list is so long. I’ve also grown an appreciation for contemporary music; I’ve never felt so much love for this genre of music until we played the Schoenberg. At each concert hall we visited, I was both awed and humbled by it – I could feel the history, traditions, people, sounds and emotions that it held, and I felt incredibly lucky to have the chance to add to each hall’s history. Thank you, and everyone who made this orchestra and tour possible, for bringing us to these magnificent libraries of sound. Thank you for making my year filled with such music, passion, and new people, and new sights. I don’t know when my next orchestra experience will be, but thank you for making what might be my last orchestra experience an amazing one. I will bring the experiences, lessons, and inspirations I’ve gained to other parts of my life and other people.

Many many thanks, and until next time
-Teresa Lin

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SHAHAR AMITAY, age 17:

Dear Mr. Zander,

Thank you so much for a great tour and a great year! I am so sorry I haven’t expressed my gratitude for this incredible experience – since November! – I haven’t written a single white sheet since our first concert, and I seriously regret it. So much has happened since then, and I never felt comfortable sharing it with the BPYO community until this tour. I was in a really dark place (November – May), struggling with depression, a troublesome romance, a dead, beloved grandfather, and the stressful process towards determining my future. And it never really felt like there was a “right” time and place to express my internal conflicts with the orchestra, because it was supposed to be a sanctuary, a place where negative thoughts couldn’t infiltrate. But now, I

realize, the whole point of a “possibility organization” is to allow a safe place for all to bring in their baggage and respective “downward spirals” and to turn it into something new, exciting, and creative. It’s not about plastering on a brave, fakely happy face for rehearsal – it’s about being and bettering ourselves, for the greater good. And so although I regret melting into the background of the orchestra (and not being a distinguished member of the community) through my time at PBYO, I am also forever appreciative of the fact that you’ve been able to open me up, mentally and emotionally. And so I leave you with two things to think about –

- a) You have changed my life; from a sloppy cellist in the 10th grade, you turned me into not only a dedicated performer of music, but also a believer and leader in possibility.
- b) Though I will probably not pursue music, you’ve left me with a lifetime of memories, wisdom, and immense experience. It may be true that my personal life and stories hadn’t made their way onto paper and into your heart (because I’m shy and slightly embarrassed in personality), but your thoughts and feelings certainly made their way into my life. And so I thank you for that. It has been such a pleasure. I will never forget my time here.

Sincerely,
Shahar Amitay

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JEREMY KLEIN, age 15:

Dear Maestro Zander,

The passion I have for this orchestra right now is unprecedented regarding the way I’ve felt about any institution. Although I have cried over music and individual people before, I have never felt this way about a whole group of people coming together to create a whole, as we like to call it. This orchestra also gave me more ambition and drive about music than anything else has. It’s interesting how although we often associate ambition and desire for success with the downward spiral, possibility gave me more of it than the downward spiral ever has. I don’t want to use this white sheet to share the parts of the tour, the pieces of music, or the people in the orchestra who have meant the most to me – there are too many of them and I believe you can guess most of them. What I want to do is express my gratitude to you for everything you have given me. Even when I disagree with a tempo, interpretive decision, or programming choice, I never forget that I am having this life-changing experience because of your commitment and effort. You have given me so much by founding and running this orchestra that you as an individual have changed my life as an individual is shocking. I cannot think of any other orchestra in which the conductor has this type of relationship to his players. After we played Elgar tonight, the first thing that came to my mind was how excited I am to continue next year. It is sometimes hard to realize how much certain experiences mean to us until they’re over. Although I will miss many of the members of the orchestra whom I won’t see next year, I believe in the Nimrod message that our friendship, even to those to whom I have never spoken, will last forever. The deepest regret I have about this year is that I have failed to jump into the orchestra’s many facets the way I would have like to. Next year I hope to become more involved with various aspects of the orchestra other than the playing and also get to know everyone in the

orchestra, which I don't now. I don't believe I have ever signed a white sheet with the word love before, but I feel that it is appropriate right now.

Much love,
Jeremy

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JOE MATHIAS, age 21:

When I was 19 years old, I left home permanently to be fully independent and separate from my parents. After doing that, I was forced to drop out of college at BU where I was studying the clarinet, and I moved into a friend's apartment looking for work. I was depressed and stopped playing and listening to music for many months. I eventually won a full scholarship to UMass Boston fortunately, and I was able to return to school, this time to study English. I was undecided as to whether I even wanted to continue playing music or pursuing it as a serious study. After I began school again, the workload between classes and my job as a real estate agent caused me to stop practicing altogether. The only music that I was still doing was our BPYO rehearsals on Saturday. They have completely changed how I feel about music in my life. After having had so much negative and burdensome emotions regarding my family and struggles with music studies, I have finally been able to understand the positive, loving nature of this art. It has made me such a more positive person. The moment after we finished Siegfried in Symphony Hall is the greatest musical memory that I have ever had. This tour in general has changed my perspective on the world. I have met so many incredible people on the tour, who I regret not talking to sooner during the year. I have found almost everybody (especially the young string players) to be joyful and outgoing. Every day I have great conversation with new people. I feel like this orchestra has been a family for me and I love playing with these great people. It makes such a difference to know each other and I think that that is the greatest part about this tour.
Thank you so much.

With love,
Joe Mathias

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EUNICE PAK, age 13:

I've learned so much; I've experienced so much; and I will never forget the life-lasting friendships and incredible adventures I took part in on this tour.

At first, I was very skeptical of going on this tour. Who would be crazy enough to travel to a completely new continent with 120 people? How could we achieve an audience in an environment that we were absolute strangers to? But yet, somehow, we did it. As we stayed in Prague, you told us to "hand out flyers," and "encourage people who really want to go, just doesn't know about the concert yet." How could we do that – considering we didn't speak in a common language? That's what I thought, until I came to a realization that music is a language. We had no idea how to say "how are you," or "good morning," or "come to our concert!" yet everybody understood the music, and we all communicated through music. As we played Ravel: Daphnis & Chloe, we all understood the sound of dawn and the celebration of marriage. In

Schoenberg: Five Pieces, we all heard the beautiful morning by the lake and the ending question of the 5th movement.

Today, playing Elgar, I didn't believe that I would cry. I wasn't prepared for the impacting emotions of the memories I vowed to never forget. As the first sobs racked my body, I finally understood. I finally understood the pain, loss, love, and memories that were put into the variation. The moment Mary held my hand comfortingly I felt all those emotions, too. I will never forget – and I will never let myself forget.

I'd like to acknowledge a few people I've come close to on this tour. Mary – a friend I will never forget. A funny, kind, and caring person who took me in like a younger sister. Kelly – for helping me crack a smile when I felt down, and welcoming me in as friend on this tour. Yoojin – for putting up with my constant complaints of being tired, hungry, or bored. She was a hell of an amazing roommate.

And lastly, my amazing older sister, Esther. My best friend, my guardian, my inspiration, and the best person to go on a life-changing experience with. I would be so lost without you, Esther. Thank you, and I love you dearly. Returning home will be the moment when I come to the realization – the realization that the experiences and adventures I've embarked on on this tour are now in the past, all memories. But somehow, I know for CERTAIN, that they will be forever engraved in my memory.

With everlasting love,
Eunice Pak

I will never forget.

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JULIA PARK, age 19:

To be very honest up until the very moment we landed in Prague, I did not want to come. I was anxious about being around people I was unfamiliar with, being in a foreign environment, and having to make new friends. The sole reason – or the only two reasons – I decided to go was the fact that the tour was a FREE trip to Europe and it was a musical opportunity.

But now, looking back on the past 17 days, my heart has never felt heavier to move on. I have formed invaluable friendships with people I did not expect. The music/repertoire will be forever engraved on my heart and memories. And when will I step on the Berlin Philharmonic stage ever again in my life?? Most likely never.

A thought struck me when we went hiking in Interlaken. Why is that us humans are so amazed and fascinated and moved by sights of looking mountains of incredible heights, of vast expanses of clear, blue, still waters, and blue skies speckled with clouds? I believe we humans need to be reminded of our smallness; we need to be humbled by things found in nature that are beyond our control. We need to be separated from our superfluous worries in our daily lives and put our life,

our generation, and humanity in perspective. There will always be things greater than us and our lives.

And this thought inspired me to rethink my purpose on this earth. The span of my life in light of the constant mountains of Switzerland is a mere passing breeze through one of its trees. Do I want to live my life for myself, for so-called “stability,” and people and societal expectations? Or can I live with meaning by being a contribution to something greater than me? I am unsure what the latter life entails, but I do know that the life I envision for myself is possible through my love for music – my intense, deep, and sometimes desperate love for music-making.

I am incredibly grateful that I am still young and have so many options and opportunities going forward, and I thank this tour for having been a time of realization for me. At every concert I looked around at the people I was on stage with and every single time I thought, “What did I do to deserve to be here?” I have been so blessed and honored that my presence, my love for the art of music-making, and the little talent I have to offer have been enough to bring me here.

Thank you BPYO for allowing me to see the possibilities in my life, in my being, and in my existence. I don’t know if my heart will ache the same way when playing Don Quixote or Daphnis et Chloe, if I’ll ever experience the same breathlessness when playing Schoenberg, or if I’ll feel the immense energy when playing Bartok. For that one moment, that one note in the music, I have given and dedicated my all, and perhaps, that is the way I want to live my life.
-Julia Park

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SUSANNA MONROE, age 16:

Dear Mr. Zander,

I had wondered why we hadn’t been writing white sheets this entire tour, and now that we finally are, I am 100% certain that I will remember 90% of the things I want to say after I hand this in. I suppose I should start with the obvious: playing in the Berliner Philharmonie. I’m not sure words can describe the feeling of completing that concert with the final notes of the Bartok (and Nimrod, of course) – in fact, I am entirely sure they cannot. But when we were standing on that stage together, listening to the applause and cheers of people who were truly touched and changed by the incredible thing that we had just accomplished, it finally hit me just how incredibly, undeniably lucky we all are.

You asked us to acknowledge people in this white sheet, but honestly I don’t think I could ever choose just a few people. Like you said, everyone in this orchestra equally deserves to be acknowledged. The talent, enthusiasm, and inspiration exerted by every single member of this group is overwhelming, and I could not be happier to be a part of it.

I don’t think I have ever appreciated music as much as I have on this tour. No matter how tired I was during rehearsals and concerts, I almost always noticed something new about a piece that intrigued me in some way. I sincerely hope that this is something that continues to happen for the

rest of my life, and I sincerely hope that the values and lessons I have learned on this tour will help this hope become reality.

I also came to appreciate just how much music means to people here. And if music did not already mean something to them, we helped it do so, and that is something that I never even dreamed of doing. While playing in the concert is really fun, of course, I think the best part for me is the end, when you hear the people clapping and cheering and you know that you have done something really special and you just feel so proud. I struggle to think of another time in my life when I have felt that way.

Of course we are all devastated that this journey has reached its end, but in my mind this tour is not over, and it never will be. I strongly believe that this tour will live on forever in our hearts and minds, enabling us to walk with spirit and love and be the whole for the rest of our lives. Thank you for the fantastic experience this has been!

-Susanna

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WALKER STROUD, age 17:

6/30/15

Dear Maestro Zander,

This tour has been quite the experience for me. It has easily been one of the best experiences of my entire life. I want to thank you so much for giving me such an amazing opportunity two years ago. I remember how nervous I was finding out there was an interview portion to the audition. To my surprise, the interview was my favorite part of my audition. The way every person in the room smiled and gave warm-hearted gestures and comments made me feel comfortable and at home. When I received the email that I had been accepted to the BPYO, I dropped my head to the kitchen table in awe. This orchestra has changed my life in so many ways that I would need all of the white sheets in the world to list them.

The Europe tour has been something I will never forget for as long as I live. Playing in all of these extraordinary halls has not only been a privilege but also a blessing. I feel like I still have not yet woken up from a fantastic dream after the concert in Berlin.

I would like to thank my section leaders, Hyunnew and Julia for being such great section leaders. They rarely missed and entrance and took in the second violin section as a family. We even ended up calling them mom and dad! I would ultimately like to recognize everyone in this orchestra for being amazing people and fantastic musical players. Playing music with this group has been out of this world. I am and always will be in awe at every rehearsal.

The amount of new friends I have made through this organization and this tour has changed my life and has made me a better person. The feeling of connecting with others with the same attitude of possibility and love is something you do not find every day.

An off topic highlight from the tour was meeting Mr. Wyss. After I had told him about golf, we immediately had a connection. He had told me to give him my information so we could get together and play a round. I am pleased to say I wrote him a long letter as well as my information. Hopefully everything works out and we can get together. But that is what the spirit of possibility is for, is it not?

Thank you again Mr. Zander, from the bottom of my heart for providing us all with such an amazing experience. I cannot wait to see what is in store for next year.

Your 3rd second violinist,
Joseph Walker Stroud

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EUNA LEE, age 17:

6.30.15

Dear [all of BPYO],

I am honestly speechless. To be here in this orchestra, with these exact people, and to play such amazing music has been one of the greatest experiences of my life. Just this tour alone was undeniably a perfect solution in my busy and stressful life. I never would have imagined that I would be able to play alongside Natalia Gutman and play in such beautiful places that likewise share a love for music. Then, I learned so much from these past 2-3 weeks. This idea of possibility and always being open to new perspectives has been purely enlightening, especially since I have a dream of becoming a psychiatrist and incorporating the magic of music into this profession. As you, Zander, mentioned before, there were indeed a lot of tight-knit groups and cliques, which I almost believed would be impossible to break. I was very wrong about that. Because of you, I have formed great friendships despite the age or instrument. I got to talk to and befriend someone as young as Henry and one older like Sam. Wow, what an unforgettable experience this has been; I'm still in shock. Finally, I'd like to thank and acknowledge Josh Henderson. Thank you so much for giving me this chance to be stand partners with such a unique, independent, and music-loving young man. I believe that I learned so much about both music and life through him that I would've been ignorant of otherwise. He kept me encouraged and always motivated me whenever I felt lacking or down emotionally. Although he may not see it himself, he truly exudes a sense of possibility.

Thank you. THANK YOU! You have chosen me to share with others all that I have been taught through you. Yes you're not just talking to 120 musicians, but you're talking to the world. It has been such an inspiration being here and doing what I love. I cannot wait for what next year has in store for me, no for all of us. Thanks again!!

Love,
Euna Lee

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CAM ZWEBER, age 17:

Dear Maestro Zander,

You have no idea how much this tour means to me. 4 years ago I toured Prague and Germany with a youth orchestra and saw similar things, but this does not remotely resemble this incredible tour that we just finished. It's not only that this orchestra plays on a higher level than any other orchestra, but it's the group of people that inspire, impress, and move me every day. This tour has completely removed me from the very familiar world of competition, ego, and selfishness that I witness in every other institution I am a part of. This particular group of people live in possibility and focus on helping, sharing, and creating something valuable and sustainable. Maybe this is the reason our orchestra plays better than any other: it's because we live, walk, and talk with the same positivity and energy and love as we perform. This means our performances are truly genuine and beautiful. I love looking into the crowd during a concert and on this tour. I witnessed a connection and reaction with the audience that I've never experienced, and one they have never experienced either. Our orchestra was living with the audience as one. The audience learned from us, but I also learned so much from the audience. Right before the concert, I was in an amazing mood and you noticed and asked why I was so happy. I said, "How can you not be this happy when everyone around you is." This sense of "being the whole" has touched me very much on this tour. The connections I've made with my colleagues, mentors, and audiences has really shown me what miracles are possible. You have taught me how to live and how to share music and now I have taught the audience that. This is one of my first white sheets and I'm writing this to thank you for spreading your love and showing me how to spread mine to others. This year and tour has revealed so much passion that I never knew existed within me. Have an amazing summer and I'll see you next year!

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ANONYMOUS:

Dear Mr. Zander,

Leaving our final tour meeting, it is hitting me again how special these last 2 weeks have been, undoubtedly one of the best 2 weeks of my life. What amazes me is how rich this tour has been in many, many aspects. The musical aspect of this tour, the central piece, was incredible. To be able to play 8 concerts in such beautiful and historical halls was amazing. Hearing the Berlin Philharmonic live, playing in the Philharmonie, meeting Sir Simon Rattle, having the privilege to play with Natalia Gutman on multiple occasions, etc. The list is endless. I loved being able to spend so much time with this music. Each rehearsal and concert I was always hearing new voices I hadn't noticed before. And what a privilege it was to get to spend 2 full weeks surrounded by such talented young musicians and renowned people in the music world such as you, Richard Dyer, David St. George, Mark Churchill.

But I think what also made this tour so moving and inspirational was that it was rich in many other ways. It offered a chance to experience and see 3 different countries, to learn about history, architecture, the cultures in those countries. To walk down streets in Europe filled with the

sounds of other languages, music by street musicians, the gongs of astronomical clocks, the smell of food in the air.

My favorite experience on this tour was the night we spent up on the mountain in Bern. It was so much fun to be able to meet the other students from the conservatory. The dancing, the jazz music, the food – I found myself smiling all night, giddy with laughter and joy. And every 5 minutes or so I would look around and my heart would stop again at the sight of the view looking out over Bern to the mountains and multicolored sunset. It was a truly magical evening. I loved what the tour also meant socially for the orchestra. What David St. George said at the meeting was true, age barriers in many ways seemed to just melt away; and how freeing it was! Though there are still many in the orchestra that I may not have met fully, I feel bound to everyone in this organization through this incredible experience. The sense of community in this orchestra grew so much over the past 2 weeks. For me personally, watching how others interacted and meet new people (for example, Emily – she is amazingly good at meeting new people and becoming fast friends) has taught me a lot about breaking away from my comfort zone (socially), being brave, and reaching out to meet new people. Next year, I will try even more to say hello to people and branch out because I know that so many wonderful possibilities live in the relationships we have with other people. And all it has to start with is “hello,” create an open heart, and a desire to make a connection. This tour has shown me that.

Though you are probably already planning on doing this, I think it is especially important to talk about where this orchestra came from at the start of next year because so many new people will be joining (as a result of so many leaving). I have always found it very moving to be reminded where this orchestra started, because it fully embodies the idea of possibility, that such a powerful thing could come from just a vision. Hearing about BPYO’s beginning I think also reminds us of why we are here, the purpose to spread music and enrolling ourselves and others in possibility because so few organizations run like this one. Granted, I am speaking as someone who joined after BPYO’s inaugural year – but I have always found it immensely inspirational to hear again about BPYO’s beginning and first year.

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LAURYN PHINNEY, age 16:

I don’t know how I will ever be able to truly express how grateful I am for this orchestra and this tour. I will never forget talking with my grandmother the year before I joined BPYO. At the time, I hated the orchestra I was in. There was no inspiration. I knew few people in the group, and I was overall fairly unhappy. Immediately my grandmother took me to a rehearsal during BPYO’s first year, and I signed up for an audition. She told me that the orchestral experience has the potential to be so much more and she knew BPYO was living that possibility. And she was right – this has been among the best experiences probably of my entire life. BPYO has offered me so many opportunities to see, learn, and experience on this tour, and all of it before I have even turned 18. I hope and will try to find as many ways as I can to give back as much as the group has given me.

Thank you again and again and again for these last 2 weeks of music, inspiration, learning, laughter, and pure joy!

-Lauryn Phinney

Also HUGE, HUGE thank you to Elisabeth, the chaperones, and everyone who made this possible!

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ISABEL ESPINOSA, age 18:

Dear Mr. Zander,

Right now I'm standing writing this letter, surrounded by incredible musicians – people I have gotten to know, love and grow to admire even more than I did before this tour. Before I left on June 13th, my parents would often stop whatever they were doing, at any point in the days leading to our departure, and they would stare at me – eyes wide and shining – and exclaim, “You’re going to Europe!” I thought at first that they were excited for me because that is what parents do: they want their kids to go far beyond what they thought possible. This is certainly true of my parents, but a couple of days into the tour, after talking to my dad one night, I realized this tour meant so much more than just having amazing opportunities, it symbolized an enormous benchmark in the story that began with my parents and continues with me. My parents grew up listening to music made in the halls we played in. I got to see them and make music in these legendary halls!

In school, one of my favorite quotes to think on as I did my work was Isaac Newton’s acknowledgment of the work of his predecessors: “We stand on the shoulders of giants.” Tonight, after our unforgettable concert, everyone at my table shared their favorite moment on tour. We remembered Prague, the Philharmonie, and all of our adventures. We talked about all the perfect days that we had, having lunches and conversations with people with whom we would never have imagined talking. We thanked each other for friendship, honest conversations, and sharing emotions in times of need. I realize that not only do I stand on the shoulders of the giants who played in these halls before us, but that I am surrounded by giants everywhere I look in this orchestra.

I wish to acknowledge two people especially. Mirella, my roommate in two cities, was a joy to get to know. Even though we are both generally quiet people at heart, the way in which she openly approached others with gestures of friendship inspired me to take the plunge and introduce myself to people I had never met or who intimidated me. She is the most kindhearted person I’ve ever known and her presence will influence me long after I go back home. I would also like to acknowledge Alma, who I also got to know on this tour. Whenever anyone complained or began to gossip or say something unkind, Alma would interject not only with words of thanksgiving, but also with quick imaginative wit: she is sincere in a world that values conformity and safety in cynicism, and she has a beautiful heart.

All in all, I have only thanks to give.

In spirit and love,
Isabel Espinosa

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RAFFI BODEN, age 19:

Dear Mr. Zander,

I don't have the words to thank you enough for this glorious opportunity. It is a miracle that I am on this tour at all! What a joy to be welcomed back into the most warm and passionate environment. The second I played Elgar again with BPYO, I felt like I was being welcomed home after a long voyage.

And so this voyage began! I have grown immensely as a leader on this tour. The chance to lead a section like the BPYO cellos in the Bartok is an experience I won't soon forget. Rehearsing the Klengel Hymnus as one of the solo parts also forced me to step up among my section, and brought us all closer together. I love your/Roz's definition of a leader, and will strive to meet it from now on.

I have fallen in love with all of our program. Before May, I hardly knew Schoenberg and Ravel, and now they are stuck with me forever. Don Quixote is probably my favorite tone poem. Playing with Natalia Gutman and Jonah has been an honor and privilege. And performing in the Philharmonie is once in a lifetime.

Fond memories of this tour will stay with me forever. I am so lucky to have had such a miraculous opportunity. Thank you.

With love,
Raffi Boden

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BETHANY HARGREAVES, age 20:

Dearest Mr. Zander,

I want to start this white sheet out by thanking you and the entire orchestra for welcoming me into the group and making me feel incredibly loved. I know that it must have been strange for the orchestra to have a completely new person join the group, but after the two months that I got to play with BPYO, I feel as though I have truly been part of one of the most special youth orchestras in the world. Each person in your orchestra are such beautiful musicians and people... it has been a joy to be able to meet new people and become even closer with those who I hold very, very close to my heart.

As someone who loves to travel, I couldn't have ever imagined being able to experience the extraordinary combination of the Czech Republic, Germany, and Switzerland (my new favorite place on earth!). It was so refreshing to experience and be exposed to so many different cultures and watch how all of the audiences appreciate music. I will also never forget about all of the gorgeous concert halls that we played in. These gifts that you have given us are extremely rare, so I am sure that not a single person in BPYO will forget this magical tour.

This tour has also taught me how to lead, develop musical consistency, respect, but most of all, love. As someone who comes from a broken family with years and years of toxic disrespect and negativity, I have been trying to reverse those earlier years and by loving as much as humanly possible and surrounding myself with as many loving people as I can, whether they are old friends or new friends. Honestly, it is hard not to bubble over with love and joy when we are all surrounded by gorgeous landscapes. It almost doesn't feel real. This tour has helped me discover new things about myself, so I give you and your orchestra all of the credit for helping me on this journey.

I cannot thank you enough for giving me this opportunity. It was an adventure that I will never forget. You are always such a huge inspiration and light of possibility to all of us! You make my life such a wonderful place... Thank you!!

With all my love,
Bethany Hargreaves

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NICHOLAS GALLITANO, age 18:

Dear Mr. Zander,

I can easily say that the last 17 days have been 17 of the most unforgettable, educational, musically enriching, beautiful, and fulfilling days of my entire life. I can't tell you the number of times I got off a bus and I was just speechless from the beauty of my surroundings. I had a similar experience at the Berlin Philharmonie, both seeing and hearing the Berlin Phil play under Simon Rattle and playing there ourselves. It was amazing how our collective ensemble seemed to anyone just by listening to a live concert there. Feelings such as this, feelings of indescribable inspiration and awe, seemed to happen to me on a daily basis for the last 17 days, and I am so grateful for that.

Even more, though, looking at the bigger picture of my life, I feel that I can also say that the last 3 years of my life, the 3 in which I have been a part of BPYO, have been 3 years full of growth – musical, emotional, and personal. When I joined the orchestra in 2012, you may remember that I could play the viola adequately at most. I was the best violist in my school along with Gerald and that gave me some sort of inflated sense of self-worth in a negative way. However, I was quickly shown that there was a whole world of viola out there that was yet to be unlocked. I was given the privilege of sitting under the leadership of violists like Linda Numagami & Natalie Alper-Leroux, two fantastically hardworking and talented violists. And, I was simultaneously given the

opportunity to play pieces like Ein Heldenleben and Mahler 5, which have devilishly difficult viola parts. Just learning those parts and playing them in a section setting improved my playing. In addition to the physical musical growth I experienced from playing in the BPYO viola section, there was also the growth I experienced from certain assignments and other opportunities. First and foremost, walking with spirit and love is possibly the best assignment you have ever given us. We have received this assignment at several different points over the last 3 years, and always at the perfect times: one before the very first rehearsals, before our Carnegie Hall concert, and before tour first year (in addition to other moments). Only now am I able to see the effects of magical assignments; I have walked with spirit and love for this whole tour, and, combined with the spirit and love with all the other BPYO musicians, I have seen and heard us radiating possibility and enrolling other people – namely the Swiss, the Czech, and the German people. Our fervent applause at concerts from the audience, all of which is just a sea of smiling, beaming faces. That doesn't happen normally, or ever, for that matter. We have directly impacted all of those people in a serious way, and that is a mutually exhilarating feeling that I want to sustain. Another assignment that I must discuss is actually one that you gave only one time; before the concerto competition in 2013, you told us to “compete without competing” – essentially to play your best, without the intention of winning. Although I did not compete that year, I remembered this assignment and performed that assignment when I auditioned for the concerto competition this past year. I played the Bruch Romanze, and it was one of the first pieces that I feel I really played. As we both know, I didn't win the competition, but as I played my heart out that Saturday morning, I felt as if I had just won. I should feel like that with everything I do. It was such a fulfilling experience.

One final thing I have learned on this tour is a valuable orchestral skill. (I'm sorry to be skipping around topics here – I have a lot to say and I need to get it all out). Playing the same programs over and over means that you get to know the pieces very well. I reached the point where, when I wasn't looking at my section leader or you, I would just look around the orchestra and play with other people around the orchestra. It makes playing in orchestra like being in a chamber group. It was a joy, and it made playing so much more enjoyable, since I felt like I was really playing and connecting actively with my fellow musicians.

To close this, my final white sheet (for now), I just want to say tha ti love this orchestra immensely. I love the way we sound, I love the way we think, I love the way we better the world through our music. I love it all, and I will miss it like I miss nothing else. Thank you so, so, so, so much, Mr. Zander, for starting this unique and beautiful organization, and for changing my life forever through it.

With all the love in my heart,
Nicholas Gallitano

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KATHERINE HAROLDSON, age 21:

June 30, 2015

Dear Mr. Zander,

It's difficult to put my feelings about this tour into words. There have been so many beautiful moments publicly with the orchestra, but also privately with myself. I think about what it was like to go into each different hall with new expectations, wondering what this audience will be like, and what this hall will sound like. Never was I disappointed.

I think about going to Bern, the sister-city of my home town, New Bern, NC, and what it was like for me to connect with a place whose history has enriched my own. For me, our concert in Bern wasn't just about being ambassadors for the US, but for me to represent my town and its connection to our venue. It was immensely gratifying to have that opportunity.

I could write pages about the members of this orchestra but I'm certain I wouldn't say anything you didn't already know, so I'll keep it short and sweet. I am so fortunate to have the opportunity to work with such amazing people. It is exciting that these musicians will be my colleagues in the future, and there is no doubt that the future of classical music is in good hands with this crowd.

Finally, I want to thank you for creating this opportunity and giving us this experience. Sure there were moments I wanted to cry out of exhaustion, but I loved every minute. It is truly a blessing to be able to experience the world as a young student, and you have given us all so much. The only note I want to make is that I think for the length of the tour, having days packed with tours and rehearsals and concerts was difficult to maintain. For a future tour, I would think that a slightly smaller tour with fewer activities would permit us to truly appreciate and experience the country without sacrificing rest. I don't really think I got enough sleep on this tour, and I suffered for it in that sometimes I felt like I had to choose between staying late at dinner visiting people and going back to the hotel early in order to take a nap so I could be at 110% for the concert. But as I said earlier, I enjoyed all the activities that were planned for this tour and don't regret the jam-packed schedule at all.

Thank you again for a fantastic tour to the Czech Republic, Germany, and Switzerland. Like the tour to Holland, this will stay with me for the rest of my life.

Sincerely,
Katherine Haroldson

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CARLEY YANUK, age 20:

Dear Mr. Zander,

What an incredible 2.5 weeks! I am so grateful for all of the wonderful experiences we shared. This tour has challenged me musically, socially, and culturally; I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to visit and perform in the most beautiful concert halls in the world!

After playing 8 concerts, I feel like I have just ran a marathon. I was nervous before the first 2 Bartok performances, but by the end of tour, performing was no longer stressful. These last 3

concerts were easy for me because I felt like I was in the metabolism of performing. I feel so lucky to have played 8 concerts in the 17 days. It was incredible performing experience. Before tour I felt mentally exhausted and exasperated with my percussion playing. 2 weeks before the tour I took the San Antonio Symphony percussion auditions and I was cut after the first round. Being able to perform a ton and see the Berlin Phil has rejuvenated me; giving me in the right mentality to take on the rest of the summer. I was absolutely struck by how cleanly the Berlin percussionists played. I am now determined to work on my tambourine roll and have it sound just as smoothly as the guys in Berlin played.

I am also grateful for the friendships I have made on tour. I have seen/heard every musician before in rehearsal each Saturday, but I never took the time to talk with them. I was very happy I got to room with Megan Shusta in Berlin because we became great friends on this tour. She sat in front of me in rehearsals, but I had never taken time to get to know her. In the last couple of concerts we have made it a tradition to wink at each other.

I am also grateful for all of the sight-seeing we did. It was humbling to see how old these cities are and to see buildings that have been around for hundreds of years. I feel very lucky to have been introduced to 3 different cultures. It was really interesting to see how people live and what they eat in Europe. Even though we were halfway across the world, I still managed to find a McDonald's in each country we visited.

Like you said, this really has been a perfect tour! The one thing I wish was different was the quality of the timpani we rented in the Czech Republic. The drums that we rented were not the greatest because they were impossible to be in tune with themselves. They were also not a matched set, so each drum was different.

Mr. Zander, I can't thank you enough for this amazing tour! These past 17 days have been the most exciting and musically fulfilling 17 days of my life. I really appreciate all of the effort that has been put into this tour. Thank you for this tour!

Much love,
Carley Yanuk

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MARY WOO, age 16:

Dear Mr. Zander,

This is my second white sheet ever since I joined BPYO in September.

I'm not a big fan of writing, especially because I am not a great writer unlike a lot of the musicians in our orchestra. However, I think it is time for me to share some of the memories I have/felt over the year of BPYO.

As you know, BPYO was my first time in an enormous orchestra with extremely talented musicians. I was very afraid and for the first few rehearsals, I had a difficult time adjusting. I felt

challenged by the pieces the orchestra played, and was quite sure I would never be able to reach the same quality as other violinists. All these years I have been playing the violin, music has meant nothing more than competition, and winning was the only purpose. For this reason, I never learned to appreciate music. It became a dreadful and stressful part of my life. Luckily, after joining this orchestra, I've been slowly learning to appreciate it.

From the downward spiral I was in, this orchestra has helped me pull myself out of it, and enter the path of possibility. Now, every time I place my bow on the violin strings, I feel a sense of relief and joy. During my first concert ever at the Symphony Hall, after the end of the Shostakovich Festive Overture, I felt an electric shock run through my body as all of our bows were up in the air.

That was exactly how I felt after every single concert on our tour. No words can describe the emotions I experienced during each of the eight concerts. Before the tour, I was slightly scared that by the end of our tour, the repertoires were going to be dull and not as exciting as we first began. Surprisingly, that was not the case. Every concert was equally as exciting, or even more fascinating than before. By the last concert, every single person in our orchestra knew the seven pieces by heart and truly digested it. It is simply amazing to see the orchestra grow even larger than before, and I was overwhelmed by the huge jump we all made together. It was a wonderful journey, one that I will never be able to forget. I can't express how grateful I am, to be able to come halfway across the world, to share the thrill and excitement. Now that I think about it, it is true that music is the greatest/universal communication in the world, far more powerful than words, and far more efficient.

Performing music in these great halls, surrounded by beautiful scenery will forever be engrained in me. I still cannot believe that tonight will be the last night of the tour. I wish there was a way to stop time, so that I can cherish this moment for the longest time.

Thank you so much for everything you have put in, and for everyone who has made this tour possible.

Sincerely,
Mary Woo

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HANNAH RYU, age 13:

Dear Mr. Zander,

The BPYO tour was like a firework – starting with a blast of light, which blossomed into rays of sparks, representing possibility. Every ray that had sparked within our tour had seemed to move me a step forward to becoming a leader. In other words, every action that our orchestra had took as a whole, had developed more thoughts in my mind.

I will share a few of these thoughts with you:

One of the most astounding efforts that I have experienced was performing the Dvorak cello concerto with a rising musician in his 20s and a deeply soulful musician in her 70s. Enjoying the Dvorak with the different understandings of the music from two musicians who widely differ in age has been stunning for me.

I realized that new interpretations of music are designed as age comes and age comes from the influence that music brings.

Every time we played our repertoire at rehearsals and concerts, I not only felt a growth in our playing, but I also felt myself understanding each piece better and better. Eventually, I even got to the point of understanding why the composer wrote the music, which I think is the key in learning and truly enjoying music.

By being part of this tour, I wanted to share our interpretation of music and learn from our audience. I felt that noticing the different reactions of Europeans after listening to our music had greatly impacted my sense of “being a whole” and that music is a universal language.

As a 13-year-old, I am very grateful for this incredible tour. I have never imagined that I would be able to perform in the Berlin Philharmonie.

In general, I realized that our community had not only come together because of music, but mainly because of our love and trust for one another.

I am very thankful to all the supporters, the chaperones, bus drivers, managers, friends, audiences, and of course, you, Maestro Zander.

Through BPYO, I have not only grown as a musician, but I have also matured as an artistic leader.

Thank you.

With love, Hannah Ryu

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ALMA BITRAN, age 15:

Dear Mr. Zander,

I don't think it's possible for me to even remotely express what this tour has given to me.

Instead, I'm going to make a list of moments that I will never forget.

- Landing in the Czech Republic and boarding the bus for the first time, staring open-mouthed at the rolling pastures and hills of the Czech countryside. I feel almost as if I've been desensitized to beautiful landscapes because I've seen so many of them. But then I see another breath-taking mountain and remember, where there's true beauty, it never loses meaning.
- Exploring the streets of Prague for the first time, amazed at the amount of love put into the making of every building. I felt suspended, as if in a dream. At first I thought it was the jet lag, but the whole tour, this feeling never quite wore off.

- Visiting the Jewish museum and seeing the endless names on the wall, all the names similar to those of Jewish family friends, and it hit me that all of those names on the wall, they were the same as any of us. After that visit, I felt more connected to my Jewish roots than I ever have before. Sometimes, it takes tragedy to understand what matters to you.
- Going to a jazz club in Prague in the nighttime then getting lost in the streets of the old town. Being disoriented and lost let me know the city better because I had nowhere to go.
- Playing in Dvorak Hall and feeling maybe for the first time a truly emotional, almost guttural reaction to the Schoenberg. I never thought such bizarre music would reach me on a level this innate and primitive.
- Arriving in the Berlin Philharmonie, seeing the orchestra play, witnessing firsthand the perfection and thinking, maybe, just perhaps, this is what I want to do for the rest of my life.
- Playing the Bartok Concerto for Orchestra, the piece I hold more dearly than any other in the world, in the Berlin Philharmonie. And then, seeing that the audience understood and loved it the way I do. And if I can share the emotions given to me by the Bartok with other people, strangers I've never met, then I can't ask for anything more than life.
- Staying up late in Sursee, looking up at the stars with people who I believe have come to understand me as well, noticing how even the stars shine brighter in Switzerland.
- Waking up at 5 to see the sun rising over the Alps on top of a hill, feeling completely transcendent, as if all motion inside of my was at a standstill for just a few minutes.
- Going to Zurich and feeling a sense of belonging in the city, as if it were made for me.
- Hearing Natalia Gutman play the Dvorak during our last concert in Luzern. She delivered a performance that was so incredibly moving, and rich with wisdom and history, a relic from the past. I doubt I'll ever see anyone play that way ever again – it's just not done that way anymore. The way she never ended a phrase before its time, the way her performance sang. It was bittersweet – to see the young mind, at odds with her aging body, struggling to express what used to come as easily to her. But... despite her age, her fresh spirit is omnipresent.

Thank you for an unforgettable tour.

Love,
Alma Bitran

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SARAH YU, age 21:

Dear Mr. Zander,

Sitting on our flight from Zurich back to Boston, I have been looking at the pictures and videos I have taken over the past two weeks. I wish there was a way to record everything I see and feel because the snapshots on my phone only seem to depict a small fraction of what we've experienced during this tour. First of all, I wanted to say thank you for making possible the best 18 days of my life. Playing at Berlin Philharmonie and meeting Simon Rattle, visiting the house where Wagner wrote Siegfried, hiking through the beautiful Swiss Alps, and playing our best

performance of the Dvorak concerto with Natalia Gutman yesterday – I could go on and on about the impact each experience has had on me. There's no denying the musical enrichment of this tour. In addition, however, this tour has offered me a time of reflection. Amidst the beautiful music, scenery, and friendships, this tour enabled me to truly appreciate the life-transforming journey I have had through BPYO.

When I first went to your house for my BPYO audition 2 years ago, life was very different from how it is now. Musically, I had not touched my instrument since high school and could not even fill out the BPYO application because I had no private teacher. Apart from music too, I was struggling with what I consider the darkest period of my life. While it started as a simple desire to play violin again, I later realized that with each rehearsal, BPYO had been bringing light back into my life. The music itself played a critical role, but through practicing the assignments, I also learned how to view the events in my life in a world of possibility. To think that only two years later, I would be in Europe taking part in all of the incredible opportunities we have had during this tour would have been beyond unimaginable.

The other day I had a realization: this organization has given me so much, but I am not sure what I have given to BPYO. As one of many violinists in the back of the section, I don't offer the same musical contribution that section leaders and wind/brass soloists do. Nor have I given the financial contribution that many generous donors have made to this tour. One thing I have given, however, is my full heart to BPYO. Being part of BPYO has meant the world to me, and I can't begin to express how much I will miss spending each Saturday afternoon in BFIT with you. Once medical school starts in August, I will have to relearn how to balance academics and music before I can consider taking lessons or joining an orchestra again. Even if I do manage to do so, I don't think I will be able to find an orchestra with half the talent and passion of BPYO. While it will be a scary transition, I will always remember the friendships and life lessons I have learned through this orchestra. As I move on to a new stage of my life, I promise to carry the joyful spirit and love you have given us, and share the world of possibility to those I will meet. Thank you so much for everything, and even though I will miss BPYO so much, I sincerely hope that there will be a new opportunity to play in your orchestra some day!

Sincerely,
Sarah Yu

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ESTHER PAK, age 16:

July 30th 2015

Dear Mr. Zander,

How is your summer? I miss you terribly.

I want to thank you for the amazing opportunity you had presented to over a hundred students and myself this past summer. Tour has opened up my once blind eyes to culture, music, love, and

utter happiness. Above all, it had taught me the importance of living a life of possibility, something I had never known.

Love, Esther Pak

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MEGAN SHUSTA, age 20:

Dear Mr. Zander,

Last night you asked one of the most crucial leaders of the orchestra what this tour has meant to him and his response really stood out to me. David St. George told us that he is not sure how to describe what he is feeling but rather that when he gets home, he is certain that he will burst into tears and sob. I feel exactly the same.

Over the past seventeen days, 130 strangers who I only saw a few hours per week became my family. The appreciation and gratitude that I have for you, Elisabeth and the other organizers of this tour, and each one of the 130 musicians is overwhelming me. The love I have for the BPYO feels so warm and beautiful that I can't help but smile through the grief of saying goodbye to most of these people until September and some even longer.

I know that you are already aware that the opportunity you provided me with to participate in this tour is absolutely priceless however I'll try and let you in on a few ways that this tour benefitted me musically and made me a better person.

Our performance of Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* is something I will never forget. When we were in Berlin, Simon Rattle told the audience of the concert we attended that "Concert halls remember their music." He is right; our *Daphnis et Chloé* that night made such a great emotional and musical imprint on Smetana Hall that the walls of the building will carry our energy forever. From the first sound of the low strings mixed with the color of the flutes and clarinets in the hall sounded so beautiful that I almost missed my first entrance in measure two because I was too caught up in the fact that the music sounded like pure gold. From the first downbeat I was inspired by the passionate energy you were radiating as well as the palpable emotion coming from members of the orchestra (specifically Katie, Dustin, and Hunter) that I was inspired to contribute perfectly to this concert. I did not miss a single note (which you know is quite a feat on the horn) and not only was my contribution accurate but I also felt as though it was the first orchestra performance of my life where I completely devoted myself to the music in the moment. I think I made the horn part drip with musicality; I took risks and made the pianos a true piano and the pianissimos even less. My tone was noble and tasteful. I fear coming across as arrogant by saying all of that but I want you to know how proud I am of myself. I also want you to know that this performance has inspired me to always strive to perform on that level as I hope you will do the same even if it is considered impractical to have that high of a standard. During the applause I turned to Nate sitting next to me and through teary eyes told him that I never want to give anything less than that for the rest of my life.

It has been about a week since I got to meet Sarah Willis and I am still star struck and in disbelief. To think that I got to speak with her and just be in her presence is absolutely mind boggling. I find myself telling everyone I know about Sarah Willis but I can't seem to get them to be as enthusiastic about it as me. That being said, I know you knew how much it would mean for me and the other horn players to hang out with her for a bit and that it would be something that we would appreciate more than any other person in all of Berlin on that day, so thank you for making that happen.

Berlin Philharmonie: Performing there was the greatest experience of my entire life. I can't even believe that I played there with you and the BPYO at only 20 years old where every one of the greatest soloists and orchestras has been. I sat in Stefan Dohr's principle horn chair and collaborated with these musicians to make a great performance and make me feel worthy of sitting in that chair.

After the concert in Berlin my parents recieved an email from my great aunt (my late grandfather's sister and the only surviving member of his family). Unfortunately, because of some family turmoil that happened years ago, we had fallen out of contact with her. This has been quite devastating for me because my great aunt is the one most knowledgeable of my grandparents' career (as I think you already know, both of them performed at the Met, my grandmother a soprano and my grandfather the principle cellist). Since they both died before I started with music, it has been a huge loss being out of touch with my aunt since she is the one who can best answer my questions about my musical heritage. So because you gave me the opportunity to perform in Berlin and she happened to read about it on Facebook, she put all grudges aside and reached out and blessed me with more information on my grandfather.

Here is the email she wrote to my mom:

Hi - I don't know if you are aware that your father gave a solo concert in Berlin in 1956. I thought it might be interesting for Megan to know that. I was with him then, and we spent over a week in the city which was in ruins from WW11. We also spent a month in Germany and Richard toured many cities and towns, including Nurenberg. I'll never forget a candlelit concert he gave in a castle to a rapt audience. We were guests of Prince TurnunTaxis - horrible snob, beautiful castle. Berlin was a divided city - the Russians and us - I have written a story about our experience - we spent many months in Europe and Richard gave concerts in Paris , London, Stockholm and Amsterdam. So much history here - I'm trying to put together a short book with our experiences in each city. I hope I live to finish it. Berlin is done - working on Paris now. I just thought Megan should know about Berlin - her grandfather playing there. History is so important for young people to know about, especially since her life will be in music and she has inherited so much of it from her grandparents.

Love,
Phyllis

Getting this email was a complete surprise and something that I am deeply moved by. I hope that because of the tour, I might be able to build a relationship with her again and I am realizing that this is the kind of situation you mean when you say a "tour of possibility."

To list some more things I have done on this tour that I realize are once in a life time opportunities and have had serious impact on me:

- Visiting the Jewish Quarter and walking through the synagogues in complete awe. Seeing the drawings made by the Jewish children in the concentration camps. Walking through the ancient cemetery in complete silence.

- Extremely intellectual and often silly conversations with people like Mark Churchill, Richard Dyer, and David St. George.

- Warming up every morning outside by the cows in Sursee. Those three cows that I played scales, long tones, arpeggios, etudes, and excerpts for at the crack of dawn will be an audience I never forget.

- Going on a four hour bike ride around Lake Sursee with my horn section on one of our free mornings and swimming in the meticulously clean lake water. The views I saw that morning cannot be described with words.

- Playing horn quartets during the nature walk in the Swiss Alps.

- Visiting the Wagner Museum.

- Participating in that chamber recital in Basel. Watching my friends touch the audience like that was incredible and I felt privileged to sandwich there music with some brass quintet.

- Becoming great friends with my section this horn section is the most supportive, fun, and friendly group of people I have ever played with. Lorenzo, Nate, Gabe, Justin, and Breanna, are a huge part of why I love the BPYO so much.

- Eating great food in every place we went to.

- Playing amongst some of the greatest young musicians. It was an absolute privilege to play with Jonah on Don Quixote. His musical ideas are so incredible; I hope that some of his insight rubs off on me through our friendship and the music we have played and will play together. Also listening to everyone shine in the orchestra setting is a beautiful experience. Last night as I was in the audience for Dvorak Cello Concerto, as Max was playing his duet with Natalia, his playing was so magnificent that I realized that I have to collaborate with him on something in the future. He completely blew me away and I hope that we do end up playing something like Brahms' Horn Trio one day.

- Our final performance of Nimrod and crying afterward.

I could actually go on listing hundreds of highlights from each place we visited which makes me realize that there was no climax of the tour; each moment of all seventeen days was the highlight.

Thank you for everything you have done for me and the rest of the orchestra. I am sure you are hearing this from everyone but I'll say it again: you will never understand how grateful I am for these past seventeen days; thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Hope you have a restful and relaxing summer! Keep your eyes peeled for an invitation to a recital I may have in August. It would mean the world to me if you could make it.

Sincerely,

Megan Shusta