

Three years ago, I lost my sister Tammy to an aggressive form of metastatic breast cancer. A little over three months ago, my parents and I launched a charity known as **Tammy's Tomorrow** on what would have been my sister's 50th birthday. One of the first things Tammy's Tomorrow supported was the New Jersey Youth Symphony's recent tour of Finland and the Baltics, and a little over three weeks ago, I found myself returning from that tour.

Classical music performance, cultural exchange, and helping a neighbor were all things that deeply resonated in my sister's soul. With that in mind, having Tammy's Tomorrow provide financial support to a student who otherwise would not have been able to go on tour was a cathartic experience for my family.

When I first met with Helen Cha-Pyo to discuss ways to create a legacy for my sister as an NJYS alumnus, I did not know there was an upcoming international tour or that I would become directly involved with it. Tammy's Tomorrow's financial support of the tour was even more meaningful because my wife and I were invited to be tour chaperones, and I was invited to fill out the orchestra's trombone section. The invitation to play on tour awakened a long dormant dream of mine. The invitation to be a chaperone caused me to wonder if I would regret agreeing to look after 10 high school boys for 10 days in four foreign countries.

It turned out to be a delightful experience on all counts. I had the time of my life playing trombone with a symphony in major concert halls across Europe. I knew playing with NJYS meant I would be part of a group with a very high level of musicianship, however, I did not expect to feel such a strong sense of camaraderie between members of the orchestra while also being invited into their community. Had such a harmonious atmosphere existed during my own NJYS era as a student, I would have been much more enthusiastic about my time in the program. I am in awe of the work ethic, talent, humility, friendliness, empathy, and self-

acceptance this current generation of NJYS musicians possesses before even reaching adulthood.

There are two primary reasons I played in the string section of NJYS as a child even though I am a trombonist at heart. The first is that my sister played cello in NJYS and I looked up to her. I wanted to play a string instrument because Tammy adored being a cellist and I adored my sister. The second is that my parents wanted me to make the most of any musical ability I had. I took private string and brass lessons throughout my childhood, playing trombone in my school system's jazz ensembles and playing viola across various levels of NJYS.

When my braces came off midway through high school I began to truly enjoy playing the trombone. For the first time, it felt like playing a musical instrument wasn't physically awkward. I considered pursuing trombone performance, but instead chose another path. I went on to intern with Madison Square Garden before settling on a restaurant career that lasted twenty years in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. During my time as a restaurant operator, the trombone never let me abandon it as I met a variety of accomplished professional musicians through pure happenstance and consistently received invitations to begin playing again whenever I started to think about selling my horn.

Not long before my sister passed I made the decision to sell my restaurant company. I began to believe that playing the trombone more regularly again might be a part of my future, but didn't know how to go about finding exciting performance opportunities. Then this tour found me. If not for my sister's birth it is likely I never would have been a part of NJYS, and if not for Tammy's death I would not be back in touch with the organization today.

I've come away from my time on tour with NJYS more connected than ever before to an organization that played a massive role in my development as a human, regardless of my status as a musician. I remain in touch with a few people who played in NJYS with me in the 1990s, and now I plan to be in touch with many current NJYS students for years to come. Amidst staggering familial loss, Helen and everyone under her baton has given me a sense of musical family that I have never known before. **~Tim Tobitsch**

To learn more about Tammy's Tomorrow visit https://tammystomorrow.org