

Jiovanni Torres

## How music has changed my life

Being a high school student, achieving a goal can sometimes be scary. My personal achievement began as a dream way back when I was a freshman, only a 14 year old scrawny kid with no plans for the future other than his one goal. As a kid music was always around me, my father was a musician and I remember always wanting to attend his rehearsals but never being able to because I was so young. Whenever I got the chance to listen to my dad practice I would always enjoy it. My father was a drummer and he performed extensively with his band, there were times when I wondered whether he would come home safe and sound due to him being far away performing. By the time I was 3, the time came and my dad began giving me drumming lessons, I got to the point where I could pretty much play any song by ear and I remember him being proud of me, that never got old. I stuck with it even to this day. These are early memories of my childhood.

By the time high school came around I was enrolled to "Beginning Guitar". My first reaction when I walked in the room was "wow! look at all those awards on the walls!". I remember asking Ms. Wills what those awards were for, she stated that they were awards that students earned during music competitions. I was hooked immediately, and made the promise to her as well as myself that one day my name would be up there with the rest. My first year in guitar was a struggle and at times I felt that my dream would be crushed because of my lack of talent. Nevertheless I made it to "Intermediate guitar". My 2nd year of guitar, I began to become more comfortable with the guitar and my struggling was being overshadowed by my comfort on the instrument. I started falling in love with the guitar, sometimes practicing 8 to 10 hours everyday, I couldn't stop playing and it would soon prove to pay off. By the end of my 2nd year, I was put in the "H.I.T group" which stood for the "Honors In Training" group, which was scheduled to take over the "Honor group" the following year. Hard work was starting to pay off.

My 3rd year came and by that time I was struggling less and less, it was no longer a pain learning a song, don't get me wrong, I had some trouble but I was able to overcome it much faster than before. My big break came when Ms. Wills signed me up for "CMEA" a music competition which took place at the College of Sequoias. I was really excited to finally get my chance to earn an award for doing what I love. The song I chose was "Con Salero Y Garbo" a flamenco Farruca by the master "Sabicás". At first I was nervous because I had little time to learn the piece, I remember telling Ms. Wills if she was sure I could pull this off. I'll never forget what she said after which motivated me so much. She said, "I wouldn't of signed you up if I knew you couldn't do it". Soon after I began to tackle the piece. Three weeks went by and I had finished the piece, I was happy because knowing how difficult it was and the fact that I learned it really put me at ease. Before "CMEA" came around, our class was invited to perform on "KVPR Valley Public Radio 89.3". Not only that but we got to meet up with Kevin Cooper, the guitar teacher for Fresno City College. It was a great experience learning from him, and then it was off to KVPR.

We walked in the studio and I, along with my classmates were very nervous, this was live radio!!! I was more nervous at the fact that I was scheduled to perform my solo piece a couple days before CMEA. By the time we finished, we had great reviews. CMEA was right around the corner and now I felt I could achieve my goal. The day of CMEA came and all I remember was looking at all these musicians who were also competing whether as soloist or in ensemble form. I was performing as a soloist, with a trio, and with our class ensemble. My turn came to perform my solo piece. I was sweating, my heart was beating fast and overall I was really nervous. I began, I started to relax and focus on the song, I made it through, I was thinking that I blew it and that the judge would give me a bad score, at the end he told me it was a beautiful piece and he really enjoyed it, that instantly made me feel better. In the end I earned a "Superior" which was good enough to qualify for State competition. I was really happy that I had accomplished my goal and most importantly to do it in front of Ms. Wills made it all the much better. Now that award will be on Ms. Wills' "Wall of fame" as she calls it, forever.

To this day I still look back to that day as my greatest accomplishment, it took 3 years but it was certainly worth the wait. Now to prepare for a second chance at another award this year at CMEA again and I can't wait!!