

0. MR. AYERS and HIS FRIENDS at the LA PHIL - Story Preface

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Conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen, and the members of the LA Philharmonic, were very kind to Nathaniel Ayers. In October of 2005, they allowed him to privately watch their rehearsal of Beethoven's Third Symphony ... and ... permitted him to play his own violin in the famed concert hall. Photo, 9 October 2005. Copyright, *LA Times*, all rights reserved. Online, courtesy *LA Times*. Small image provided here as fair use for educational purposes.

Nathaniel could hardly believe he was invited to attend a Disney-Hall concert, but he thought he should decline. He didn't have the proper clothes. On the other hand ... a rehearsal would be pretty amazing. How about that instead? It would almost be like a private concert.

With violin in tow, Mr. Ayers accompanied Mr. Lopez to watch the LA Philharmonic Orchestra rehearse Beethoven's Third Symphony - more commonly known as the "Eroica." After they arrived, Nathaniel was given two more unexpected gifts. The first? He was allowed to play his violin in the concert hall.

And ... Peter Snyder, a cellist who'd performed with the LA Phil for thirty-three years, had a question. How would the street musician like to have a cello lesson with a master cellist?

Nathaniel didn't have to think long. Since he'd had no music lessons since 1970, and he'd taught himself to play the cello, a lesson might be good. The first one took place, soon after he met Peter. Many more followed.

From the generosity of conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen, to the kindness of several additional members of the orchestra (like Robert Gupta, Ben Hong and Joanne Pearce-Martin), Nathaniel Ayers has been welcomed, once again, into the rarefied atmosphere of world-class musicians. The experiences have enriched his life immeasurably.

Adam Crane, then-publicist of the LA Phil and an amateur cellist, had another huge surprise for Nathaniel the following year. Yo-Yo Ma, one of the world's most popular musicians, was performing at Disney Hall in October of 2006 - and Nathaniel was invited.

This would have been a lovely invitation for anyone, but it had special meaning for Mr. Ayers. He and Yo-Yo Ma had been fellow students at Juilliard, although - even then - the cellist was a prodigy.

When they met, at Disney Hall, the two Juilliard students had something more in common than music. The cellist's humanity extended well beyond mere pleasantries. He gave Nathaniel a chance to play his cello, a rare eighteenth-century instrument.

Steve Lopez describes Disney Hall as Nathaniel's hospital and his friends at the LA Phil as his doctors. His medicine, of course, is music.

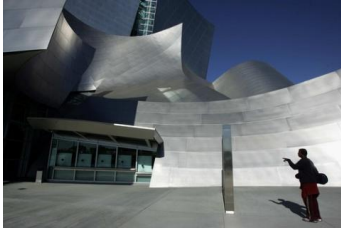
Let's listen to some of the works which Mr. Ayers enjoys the most.

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Nathaniel Ayers Goes to Disney Hall

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The Soloist - Arriving at Disney Hall

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The Soloist - Nathaniel Ayers Plays Violin at Disney Hall

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Nathaniel Ayers - Fulfilling a Dream

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Beethoven - Third ("Eroica") Symphony, 2nd Movement

Video online, courtesy NAFA (Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts) Channel at YouTube.

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