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Mr. Greco

English 3

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Old Europe in Silicon Valley

Dedication

I dedicate this book to my favorite upright bass: Charles.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank Mr. Greco and Ms. Parkinson for helping me through this project. I would also like to thank Patrick Heaney, Ben Richard, Benito Cortez, and the rest of the staff at Heaney Violins for letting me make a documentary about them and their shop. I want to personally thank Camille Shiu and Liam Shaughnessy for helping me reach out to Heaney Violins for this project.

Preface

At the beginning of the new semester, we were assigned to make a documentary about anything we were interested in. I knew that I would be interested in making one

about a local music store, so I started reaching out all over the place. I got into contact with a local violin shop called Heaney Violins through a couple of friends who work there. I finally settled on them, and I'm not regretting it. The world of orchestral string instrument retail is way more interesting than I originally thought. From this project, I've not only learned a lot about the world of instrument retail but through the process of creating my book, I've gained a lot of time management and graphic design skills. After many months of sleepless nights and continuous work. I present to you, *Old Europe in a Silicon Valley*.

Introduction

Imagine you're a famous cellist from Russia going to play a gig in San Francisco when all of a sudden, your cello breaks. A seam rips right open and one of the corners breaks off. With only hours before your big performance in the Bay Area, what would you do? Well, if you're anything like Natalia Gutman, you'd go to Heaney Violins, one of the most trusted string shops in the Bay Area.

What makes Heaney Violins such a special store though? It's got a bit to do with everything they offer. After all, they're much more than a string instrument retailer. Sure you can buy violins and strings from them, but they also do violin repairs and maintenance as well as lessons. The amazing staff will also help you with whatever you need and don't worry they know how to help you. They only hire musicians who are passionate about music.

This passion is seen in the forms of many of the staff members at the store. The head repairman, Benito Cortez, is an extremely accomplished Gypsy Jazz violinist as well as an electrical engineer. With a degree in electrical engineering from Santa Clara, he worked a variety of electronic and audio engineering-related jobs before Heaney. In fact, he actually designed the code and sound for the “Tickle me Elmo” toy in 1995. However, even with these jobs, he was still able to pursue his dedication to the Violin by taking various gigs such as touring with the folk-pop group, Dan Hicks and the Hot Licks.

The retail manager Ben Richard is another skilled musician. He is a viola performance major who graduated from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music in 2012. With that degree, he performs and teaches viola around the Bay Area. Since the age of nine, Richard has been playing the viola, and the retail manager position has only strengthened his passion by giving him a deeper knowledge of strings and string instruments.

The experience is also helped by the amazing atmosphere of the store. Walking into the store feels like your traveling into a part of old Europe. The antique furniture, the color scheme, the curtains, the rows of violins that line the wall all come together to create an immersive and interesting atmosphere. The aesthetic for Heaney’s came from none other than Chi Chen. A cellist who also specializes in interior design using

the elements of feng shui. Her dream was to do the interior design work for a violin shop, especially after designing other shops like the front window display of West Valley Music. She was originally only brought on to design only a portion of the shop, but after hearing about her dream, she was in charge of much more. “I thought she's going to help us to pick out the color of the carpet, maybe the color of the paint... And then she let me know that this was a, basically a dream project for her that she's wanted to design for a music store, a violin specialty shop”(Heaney). From her passion, she was able to turn a small local violin shop into a portal to the baroque era. Every little detail has been expertly placed to give the effect of being in a different time. Once you walk through that door, you are no longer in Silicon Valley; you're in old Europe.

Chapter 1. The History

Before the year 2005, there was a void in the San Francisco Bay Area. Specifically, there weren't many shops in the area that catered to string musicians. A man named Patrick Heaney took notice of this scarcity. As an apprentice at Kamimoto String instruments in San Jose, Heaney “noticed that a lot of the customers that were going to San Jose were coming from the peninsula area and driving all the way to San Jose”. To solve this dilemma, he knew that the Bay Area needed a violin specialty shop in a more accessible location, a location that would cut down the travel time for people in places like Palo Alto or Menlo Park. So, in 2005, Heaney opened up Heaney Violins, a violin specialty shop for string musicians by string musicians in the Heart of Silicon

Valley. With his knowledge of luthiery (string instrument maintenance) and instrument retail, combined with his passionate staff, Heaney Violins has evolved into one of the most trusted string shops in the Bay Area.

Since 2005, the store has gone through a few changes and none of them have been negative. In 2011, Cortez joined the staff of Heaney Violins. “I walked in here and I – I *liked* the place. I liked Heaney, so I asked if he needed some help” (Cortez). He started out in retail but once the previous head luthier left to pursue guitars, Cortez took his place as the current head repairman at Heaney Violins. His dedication to his craft and made it so that every instrument that leaves the shop is in it’s best condition. Later Richard would join and become the retail manager of the shop. The driving force that lead Richard to get a job at Heaney’s was his passion for music: “I do music because I love it. I love being here because I love music and I love helping people find music. It's very fulfilling. It's like phenomenally fulfilling to work here just because you help people find instruments.” As he trains in music and takes auditions, he constantly uses what he learns from his retail job in his own musical career.

Over the past 13 years, Heaney Violins has managed to stay relevant to the local music community. They’ve done this by striving for high quality in their field of string instrument retail and repair. By doing this they’ve been able to make a real impact on local string musicians.

Chapter 2: The Dedication

But how does a shop that specializes in just one class of instrument keep itself busy? Well, as mentioned before, they do much more than just sell violins. They also rent out, and repair violins, violas, and cellos as well as anything you would need for them, with the exception of double basses. One might think that there's only so much business a string specialty shop can get because it doesn't sell everyday items. Admittedly yes, it has a rather niche market; however, Heaney Violins caters to every single member of that market. From beginners in 5th grade picking up their first violin to professionals playing in all the famous concert halls around the country, there's something there for all.

The retail side of the store specializes in retail-related tasks such as selling instruments, bows, and supplies, working with customers, and cleaning instruments. When selling instruments they match the right customer to the right instrument. To a Professional musician, they might offer a higher end work of art. To a beginner in elementary school, they might offer one of their rental instruments. If someone comes in asking for a Vegan Cello, they'll know how to work with that. Richard explains, "We're trying to match the right instrument with the right customer and we ask the right questions. I mean, you're not going to try and sell a \$5,000 instrument to a beginner." They start with finding out the budget, then find out whether it's a rent or buy situation.

They'll also demo some instruments so the customer can hear what they sound like, anything to find out not only what they want but what they need.

The luthiery side of the shop deals with the maintenance and repair of string instruments. Any instrument they put out, whether it be a rental or a sale goes through a 13-step process which includes adjusting the tuning pegs and bridge, as well as changing the strings and adding a fine tuner to the tailpiece. Cortez will also play every violin while making the slightest of adjustments to ensure that it isn't just playable, but that it has been brought to its best sound. This attention to detail is rarely seen in rentals. "You never see this on rental instruments, treating them like we treat all of the serious instruments. It's serious setup and though it's not at a very high price point, they are ready to play. Anyone can play them" (Richard). This isn't just a job for Cortez; he is dedicated to making sure that each musician that uses an instrument that he's worked on has a great experience with it. The last thing he wants is for students to have the same experience as he did playing school instruments that were not at their best. "I'd like every kid to have that experience of wow this violin doesn't look like a wreck," Cortez explains. Every instrument that leaves the workshop is the best that it can be, and that's all thanks to the dedication of luthiers like Cortez and Heaney who will settle for nothing less than the best quality.

Both of these departments work off of each other to give the customer an amazing experience. One customer they had was a retired professional who hadn't

picked up her violin in years until Heaney and Cortez looked at it and gave it a professional setup. After that setup, she couldn't put it down because of how well it played and sounded. That strive for quality is what keeps Heaney Violins busy.

Chapter 3: The Importance

Despite being such a niche store, they get plenty of business. Their reputation for passion has garnered them a dedicated customer base that spans the entire Bay Area. "We have other customers where it takes them several hours. They've made an appointment and they're driving up from Monterrey or coming from San Francisco and they're only looking for an instrument case. We've had customers from Japan who visited the Bay Area and they wanted to find a violin and a case and bow and they have to do it before they go back" (Heaney). Without a store like Heaney Violins, so many local musicians would miss out on this great service. Many of them would probably have to go to guitar stores that can't tell a violin and viola apart for their orchestral needs. Shops like Heaney's act as a hub for string musicians where they can get supplies and gear from people just like them who know and understand their needs. If you're a famous cellist from another country with a broken cello and only hours before you're gig, they'll be able to help you with no problems.

Many people would think that a shop like this would be put out of business by the rise of online retail by now; however, online retail has only made it stronger. Instead of

falling to the side, Heaney Violins strives to work harder to create a quality experience for their customers, something you can't get from Amazon. Heaney explains, " they've basically upped everybody's level, they increased the competition so it's a good thing for the customer. And I think it's a good thing for businesses that are embracing quality. They want to keep raising their level." What they offer at their shop really helps with the goal of creating a specialty shop that cannot be rivaled by any online retailer. Heaney Violins maintains this standard by making sure that they have everything that they would need constantly in stock and that the quality of visit for each customer is unmatched. They also offer more services than online retailers such as instrument setup and string replacement. While there are people who might prefer to set up their instruments themselves, for many musicians, having a professional change their strings and set up their instrument can be very beneficial. A highly skilled luthier will pick up on things that most musicians will miss. They will make all the slightest adjustments to ensure that the instrument has been brought to it's best sound. All these factors contribute to an organization that cannot be rivaled by online retail stores.

Conclusion

Heaney Violins is an organization you don't see everyday. With such dedication and passion for their craft, they're a rare commodity that is extremely important for the local music community. They act as a hub for musicians where any string player can get what they need, while also getting exceptional service. The dedication of the repair shop

means that every instrument that goes through it will be in its best possible condition. Rental instruments will be brought to their greatest potential. The passion from the retail side means that every customer will be leaving the store with whatever they came there for as well as with knowledge that they most likely did not have before walking through that door. Whether you're a beginner or you're on your way to your big gig with the San Francisco Symphony, they know how to help you. This kind of shop is hard to come by, and because of that, shops like Heaney Violins are all the more important for the community they cater to.

Author Bio

Jeremy Hahn is a junior and a current member of the Freestyle Academy and Mountain View High School classes of 2020. As a high schooler he enjoys playing and making music, as well as varieties of digital art and amateur photography. His main gig is on Bass Guitar and Upright Bass, although he plays a few other instruments as well. In his freetime, he likes to write instrumentals parts for songs, play video games, and occasionally build guitars. He is in a punk garage band with a few of his friends called Feathers of Lead. He hopes to have a career as a sound designer for video games and or movies.

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| | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 | Level 4 |
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| Focus (Angle and Research) and MLA Format | <p>Writer doesn't use interview transcripts and/or there is no indication of secondary research. No indication of research-backed questioning. In-text citations and works cited page are missing.</p> <p>Honors: Nonfiction book source is not used/cited in the text, and/or two academic database sources are missing.</p> | <p>Writer makes limited use of most but not all of the required interview transcripts and secondary sources, or relies solely on "star" interview transcript. Interview testimony prompted by research-based questions is vague. Not a clear sense of an informed angle, although a view of the subject's character is certainly present. In-text citations and works cited page exist, but they contain many errors or inconsistencies.</p> <p>Honors: Nonfiction book source and two academic database sources are cited in the text, but they do not effectively define or deepen the researchable issue. In-text and/or Works Cited citation has</p> | <p>Writer makes satisfactory use of the required four interview transcripts and five secondary sources, including several database articles, although some interview testimony or secondary source material may be either overused or too limited. Interview testimony prompted by research-based questions is apparent, but could create a clearer sense of an informed angle. In-text citations and works cited page are close to MLA standards, but there are some errors.</p> <p>Honors: Nonfiction book source and two academic database sources are used to define and/or develop the researchable issue. These sources are cited in the text and in the Works Cited, although there are citation flaws.</p> | <p>Writer makes intelligent use of the required four interview transcripts and five secondary sources, including several database articles. Effective use of interview testimony prompted by research-based questions gives reader a clear sense of an informed angle. In-text citations and works cited page are perfect by MLA standards.</p> <p>Honors: In addition to the basic research requirements above, at least one nonfiction book source and two academic database sources are used compellingly to define and deepen the researchable issue. These sources are cited accurately in the text and in the Works Cited.</p> |

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| | attention to purpose/audience. | instances of specificity or sophistication, but it largely lacks attention to purpose/audience. | sophistication, although it could be improved in consideration to purpose/audience. | appropriate for the purpose and audience of this documentary. |
| Mechanics | Writing cannot be understood due to many errors of spelling, grammar, and punctuation. | Writing contains some errors. These errors affect the reader's ability to understand the material. | Writing may contain a few errors. These errors do not impact reader's ability to comprehend material. | Writing is free from errors of spelling, grammar, and punctuation. |

Grade: B