

THE CONDUCTOR

by Debi Peck

I first learned about the conductor when I was a very little child. I went to a special school that taught me all about Him. I was told that the Conductor could teach anyone to play beautiful music. In school, I learned all the notes I would need to play music. I began to learn how to play the violin, too. But, I had never met the Conductor personally, until one day He came into my schoolroom and came right up to me! He looked me right in the eye and said, "Give me a 'C'." I picked up my violin, put the bow to the string and just like I had been taught, I played a perfect "C". He was so pleased! He smiled and said, "That's just what I wanted to hear!"

As time went on, I learned to play a few songs. "Mary Had a Little Lamb" and "Ode to Joy" were nice easy ones that even a little child like me could play. We were taught to play as if the Conductor was standing right there in the room with us. Oh, how I longed to please the Conductor! Every once in a while, the Conductor would call one of us aside and give us a test. To me He always said, "Give me a 'C'." I would smile up at Him and then play that "C" as if it were a whole concert! He liked that.

When I began to get a little older, my friends and I started talking about the tests that the Conductor gives. When others began to tell how the Conductor asked them to play whole songs, I began to wonder if I was falling behind. I decided I would practice really hard and surprise the Conductor with what I knew. So, the next time He called me aside to take a test, I went with such confidence, knowing I was going to really please Him this time. Looking me right in the eye, He said, "Give me a 'C'." With a huge smile, I began to play "Ode to Joy." I played it perfectly, every note in place, with proper rhythm, and with real joy! I was so excited! I just knew He would think I was doing well. But, when I was all done, all He did was look at me and say, "Give me a 'C'."

I was disappointed, of course, but I played what He asked for anyway. Maybe I just hadn't practiced enough. Maybe it wasn't as perfect as I had thought it was. Maybe it wasn't a hard enough song. So, I started working on harder songs. I talked with other people who said their conductors required them to play three or four songs, so I found some harder songs and worked to perfect them. There was nothing I wanted more than to please the Conductor! I would work as hard as I needed to in order to see His smile again.

Time after time the Conductor would call me aside for the test, and time after time He would say the same thing, "Give me a 'C'." I brought harder and harder songs and played them for Him, but He would just shake His head sadly and repeat His request. I was so sure I could figure out what He wanted me to play. What a failure I began to feel like. But, when I talked to other people, they said that it was really the Conductor's fault; He was requiring too much out of me. They said I could never

please Him. They told me I needed to find another conductor. I didn't want to, though. I really loved this Conductor and felt sure if I could just practice harder and play more songs, He would eventually be pleased.

Year after year went by, and despair started to settle in. The joy of playing music faded, and practice became only a means of survival so I could face one more test.. One day, the Conductor called me aside for yet another test. With dread and sick at heart I approached Him. Looking me straight in the eye, He said, "Give me a 'C'." With every ounce of me aching to please Him, I began to play. This time I had chosen to play "Handell's Messiah." Line after line, song after song I played, putting my whole heart and soul into it. But, He wasn't even looking at me anymore.

Suddenly in the middle of the Hallelujah Chorus, I stopped playing. I couldn't try anymore. Dropping my violin, and with the darkness of despair closing in, I started to turn and walk away. Just then I heard Him say very quietly, "Give me a 'C'." Turning back to Him, I picked up my violin, put the bow to the string and played a "C"-the same "C" I had played as a little child; the same "C" that He had asked of me, over and over again. With tears streaming down my face, I played that "C". If a "C" was all He would accept from me, then a "C" is what I could give Him. I had tried every other way to please Him without success, and I felt like I had nothing more to give. So, I played the "C".

Suddenly the room was filled with the brightness of His smile. He looked me straight in the eye and said, "That's what I wanted to hear. You see, the "C" represents all you are. It represents your complete obedience to me. All the other music you played may have been beautiful, but it wasn't what I asked for. When you played the "C" for me, you were doing the one thing that pleases me-obeying me. All those years when you thought I was being unreasonable in my demands, all those things you thought you had to do to please me, only brought me sadness, because you weren't giving me the one thing I was asking for-your complete self."

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