

SPIRIT OF THE MEMORIAL ORCHESTRA

The Spirit of the Memorial Orchestra Award was first presented in 2003 – and since then – I have chosen only three students to receive this special award. One of the unique things that happened when I chose this year's winner was that I was able to consult with the members of my family to help me write this description of Jennifer Yu.

Some of the words that they came up with do describe her are compassionate, encouraging, full of joy, excited, trustworthy, committed, kind and fun to play with. In addition – I would add that she is loving, caring, engaging, a leader and a visionary.

You all know that Jennifer has served the orchestra so well this year as Co-President. She has lead with grace and love – and has rightfully earned the respect of our students.

Even before that – Jennifer has been a servant to the orchestra – always putting the needs of the organization before her own. A few years ago – in preparation for our performances at Carnegie Hall – I asked Jennifer if she would consider playing viola because we were short in that section. She eagerly agreed to do so – picked up the instrument and dove into learning it and quickly became one of our strong players. Last year – seeing that the viola shortage was more than a short term problem – she volunteered to continue to play viola – proving that the sacrifice to do so was a worthwhile thing.

This past summer – Jennifer accompanied my family and myself on a mission trip to Zambia where our purpose was to minister to orphans – children of AIDS. Either these children had lost one or both parents to this awful disease – or they suffered from it themselves. It was there that I witnessed first hand how she could share unconditional love with children she didn't even know and it was a blessing to watch as she showed them that *someone* in this world cared for them. I would bet that if you asked her tonight – she could name all the children that were in her group.

But that caring and compassionate attitude didn't stop when we came back to the states. Daily – I see Jennifer reach out and get into the lives of her friends and the students of the orchestra. And the love that she shows them is the same love that she showed the needy.

When we talk about the Memorial Orchestra – we talk about family. Each of you knows how hard it is to separate the two. And tonight – we recognize Jennifer because she is actively perpetuating this bond. Jennifer – as you come up here – please let us recognize and encourage you because you exemplify the Spirit of the Memorial Orchestra!