



Tom C. Clark High School

NORTHSIDE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

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To Whom It May Concern:

Earlier this year we were gifted with an incredible once in a lifetime opportunity. ARTS San Antonio brought the world famous classical duo, Igudesman & Joo to Clark High School. Though most people who are not die hard classical music fans will not recognize this duo, the students of Clark Orchestra were already huge fans of Igudesman & Joo skits. For years I have waited for Igudesman & Joo to bring their act to San Antonio, hoping to go see them perform. Never in our wildest dreams did we believe they would come to our school. In the eyes of a teenager, heroes in classical music are hard to come by. Igudesman & Joo bring youth and vibrance to the stage with their uncanny ability to cross age gaps and connect with any audience.

We have a diverse community at Clark High School. 25-30% of my students are labeled as economically disadvantaged. These students are often left out of enrichment activities that require extra money. Though we strive for equality in education at Clark, there is a limit to what we can provide for all students. A workshop with world class musicians is usually out of our reach financially. ARTS San Antonio was able to bring the "8 to 88" workshop to Clark High School at no cost to our students. Hundreds of students were touched by the unique presentation. Igudesman & Joo focused on expanding creativity, thinking outside the box, problem solving in the moment, and embracing real world situations that will never be "perfect" in performance.

Teachers were thrilled to see a classical music act that could entertain even those who do not play an instrument. Several teachers commented to me that they had a greater understanding and appreciation for classical music after seeing Igudesman & Joo. The humor definitely was a big selling point, but the teachers and students were also wowed by the professional playing ability of the musicians. They loved the message that classical music does not have to be stuffy and uptight. It is for everyone! Igudesman & Joo put students in awkward situations on stage (on purpose) to teach them how to handle situations when they are not ideal. For example, during one student's piano solo they asked another student to wave hands in front of the pianist's eyes, and distract him by jumping around. They also had all of the students role play, and taught them how to use their different "personalities" to get around nervousness in performance, and let the music out.

Coincidentally, several of my students had region and state orchestra auditions and a concert the week after the “8 to 88” program. This workshop could not have come at a better time. I had a cellist who was playing a big solo at the concert. She had never played it correctly, and was becoming rather despondent and fearful each time she played. A few days after the workshop, she performed in class and the solo was near perfect! I asked her what she did differently and she told me that the “8 to 88” workshop taught her to approach practicing and performing in a different way, and just by changing her perspective she was able to overcome the hitches in her playing. Several of my students were using catch phrases from the workshop as a mantra for their region and state auditions. My favorite was students talking about strutting into the audition room with confidence and thinking to themselves: “Hey judges, you are lucky you get to hear me play today!”

As an added bonus ARTS San Antonio provided tickets to Igudesman & Joo’s show “And Now, Mozart” the day after their workshop. Many of my students would never have been able to afford to go. We felt like royalty in the audience as ARTS San Antonio publicly welcomed our schools. Students, administrators, and teachers left the show with big smiles on their faces. There is something very moving about seeing a performance when you have made a personal connection with the performer on stage. Creativity, persistence, humor, motivation, courage are all things that we learned from this experience. After graduation my students may not remember how well they did on their standardized test, or which grade they got in English; but they will never forget meeting Igudesman & Joo, and the important life lessons learned.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Teresa Nguyen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'T'.

Teresa Nguyen
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