

The Symphony of America

The United States of America is more than just a melting pot of intertwined cultures and traditions mixing together, but is the captivating rush of instruments in a sweeping orchestra, where each melody is unique but somehow blends in to create a symphony like no other. America is more than just the connection between cultures and individual identities, but represents the freedom that our Founding Fathers instilled, which allowed for the melodious harmony of America to dance throughout the country. While the finished symphony from an orchestra is what resonates most with people, the individual roles that the various instruments hold, as well as how each miniscule note carries the music are arguably what allows an orchestra to really shine.

Like an orchestra, each state contributes to the meaning of America, using the stories and traditions that make each state unique to contribute to the symphony of our country. In America's orchestra, Illinois is the harp- an ethereal instrument which uses each individual string to produce sweeping arpeggios and rich melodies. Inside the harp that is Illinois, every person's unique experiences throughout their life makes up their string, which is the harp. My string filled with my family's traditions and experiences is woven in with the strings of every Illinoisan to unexplainable connect to the bigger meaning of Illinois and America's story. Moreover, my string represents not just one culture or tradition, but a multitude of experiences that give life to the melody of America. When I walk through my community and the surrounding towns in which I visit, I am surrounded by various cultures and ethnicities, as well as my own Chinese culture, with each individual person adding their own unique experience to help enhance my string. Growing up, I often struggled to see where my own culture fit into America's overall story. However, through the experiences over the past 15 years of my life, as well as through

interactions with so many unique people, I've come to understand where my culture fits in. It is not sitting in the background, but synthesizes with all cultures in my community, where each one is adding its own flare and unique beat through food, language, and sharing of tradition, thus strengthening my own cultural identity. In my community, but also throughout Illinois, people's unique cultures and stories that they carry from their families shape the diverse cultural landscape of Illinois, one specific characteristic of Illinois that adds to the uniqueness of America. America is a prominent example of the product of cultural connection, where cultures and traditions compliment each other, rather than overpower one another. Furthermore, when all the individual notes and melodies in a symphony intertwine with the instruments in an orchestra, a sense of freedom is achieved, such freedom which is the backbone of America's story. Freedom is a beautiful gift and responsibility that truly shaped our country into the complex cultural landscape that we know it as. Without freedom, the blending of people's cultures, traditions, and various life experiences that they carry would not be possible, leading to an alternate version of America, which would lack the richness that each culture and tradition adds to America's symphony.

The United States of America is a beautiful orchestra, made up of various instruments, each one different from the others, but equally as important. Inside the instruments, each piece, string, or chord plays an influential role in creating the symphonic melody that resonates with the crowd. The story of Illinois is individually shaped through the strings that each person carries- their culture, traditions, and experiences. These strings interconnect, profoundly impacting not only the story of Illinois, but the story of America- a story that carries the symphony of freedom and hope to all those who listen.