



Warm-Up

My wife, Doyen, and I were on our way back from a road trip to Tucson, in about hour ten of a fifteen-hour drive home to Colorado. We had been quiet for a while, enjoying the piñon country of northern New Mexico, when I blurted out, “Here's an idea...”.

That is always a sure sign for my wife to tighten her seat-belt since, in the past, it has led to things such as building a covered wagon to take our family on trips on the Oregon Trail and spending Christmas in a log cabin at forty below zero.

But this was different. I had been antsy for some time, looking for a project to dig into and not coming up with anything worthwhile. Suddenly, without warning, it came to

me in a rush, completely formed, amidst that desolate New Mexico landscape: I would play all the instruments in the orchestra.

I am not a musician, but I have a lifelong love of classical music and am always in awe listening to those who make the music I love.

How many of us, I thought, would want the experience of feeling a bow in our hand, or keys or valves under our fingers, and the glorious sensation of making music?

"You know I love classical music, right?" I ask Doyen.

"Yes," Doyen says, her voice rising to a lingering question.

"I think I'd like to play all the instruments in the orchestra."

"All of them," she states flatly, the words catching in her throat.

"Well, almost all of them," I reply.

Humoring me, she says, "And how are you going to do that?"

"It's simple. I'll just take lessons."

"That's simple?"

"Yes, why not?"

"Jim," Doyen says in a soothing and placating voice, "you're seventy-six."