

ANNA ONEGLIA

Backstage #3, 2014
oil on canvas, 48 x 36 in



courtesy the artist

NATHANIEL FIGUEROA

Worship at the Altar of the Mariachi Maestro

Dad and I didn't talk much, because we usually didn't have much to talk about outside of what time we'd be working and when he needed rent, so when he came into my room one day and asked if he could sit down, I agreed, mostly out of curiosity. I hastily opened my window in an attempt to air things out a little bit, to no avail. Dad sat for a moment, still, and seeing his face up close startled me—I guess I'd just never noticed his years until now. He had aged well, and I'm sure his devilishly handsome looks and demeanor hadn't hurt him in his youth. His eyes were still a deep lustrous green, and his mustache was as dark as I remembered it being when him and mom would make popcorn and take me for a stroll around the state capitol.

"What's up, anything you want to talk about?" It felt forced, and all I was hoping for at this point was that he wouldn't try and give me some sort of rambling, manly advice about how to act after a breakup. A moment of hesitation before his reply, in a thick accent unintelligible to most,

"I was wondering if you wanted to learn a new song." He paused for a second before saying, "Every song you learn is yours, forever. It is a fountain of wealth that will give you money as long as you live, and no one can ever take it away from you."

He'd told me this a thousand times, but I knew it was true. The more songs you knew, the more valuable you were to a group, plain and simple. The best violin player in the world was useless to a mariachi band if they didn't know any songs by heart, although this didn't hold true for mariachi bands who only read sheet music. I never really trusted those bands, though, on principle.

"Well shit, I got nothing going on, let's bust one out." I grabbed my oversized tan violin case from my closet and joined my dad in the living room of our apartment in downtown Sacramento. I didn't know how to tell him that I appreciated this fountain he'd shown me more than he could ever know. I didn't know how to tell him I loved him more than he could ever know either, and I sure as hell couldn't talk to him about Tatiana.

We went through a piece called *La Dama Aragonesa*, forwards and backwards and every which way until I had it down. It really is a lovely piece, with three distinct movements that all grow off one another and are super fun to