

Taiwanese Pianist's Prize Winning Career Launched in Philadelphia

By Bonnie Eisenfeld

Imagine two shy young Taiwanese high school girls arriving in Center City Philadelphia to live in a high-rise apartment, study music, improve their English, attend high school and handle their household and finances. Ching-Yun Hu, 14, and her sister Han-Yun Hu, 16, came to the U.S. from Taipei, Taiwan to study music, and did just that in 1996. Since she was 5, Ching-Yun wanted to become a concert pianist, and she had the talent to make it happen. She won a Chopin competition at 12, and at 13 she debuted with the Poland Capella Cracoriensis Chamber Orchestra when it toured Asia as part of a cultural exchange program.

Ching-Yun's ambition was to attend The Juilliard School, and her mother, a schoolteacher, supported this goal. She traveled with her two daughters to Philadelphia and stayed with them for a month to help them settle into their apartment in Academy House. Ching-Yun attended high school in the Rittenhouse Square area during the week and on Saturdays she studied at The Juilliard School. She left for New York at 5:30 a.m. and did not arrive back in Philadelphia until 9:30 p.m.

When the two sisters rented their apartment they were surprised to find they would have two loving American "adoptive" parents. The owners of the apartment were a childless couple who took the sisters under their wings and invited them to dinner and to Longwood Gardens, helped them with their banking, took them to the post office and picked them up at school when they were sick.

In 1998, Ching-Yun, 16, won the Silver Medal at the Taipei International Piano Competition. She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees at The Juilliard School and a Musical Artist Diploma from the Cleveland Institute of Music where she studied with Sergei Babayan, a world-renowned concert pianist.

In 2008, Ching-Yun won top prizes in the Arthur Rubinstein International Master Competition in Tel Aviv. Israeli critics said she had a "superstar quality" and was "full of flair." Subsequently, she toured seven cities in Israel and performed with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. Ching-Yun has won dozens of awards and prizes at international competitions, performed with the Philadelphia Orchestra, at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center in New York and at the Kennedy



Muzik Han-Shan Wang

Ching-Yun Hue arrived in Philadelphia from Taipei when she was 16 years old to study music.

Center in D.C., soloed in European, Asian and African capitals and toured with world-class orchestras. After living in different cities and playing in worldwide competitions for many years, Ching-Yun has returned to Philadelphia.

Ching-Yun is the organizer and artistic director of the November 2012 Yun-Hsiang International Music Festival, a three-week event held in Taipei. She says, "The central idea of the Festival is to promote classical music as well as to provide world-class training opportunities to young Taiwanese musicians." Ching-Yun has invited accomplished artists from around the world to participate as faculty. The Festival is supported by the Evergreen Symphony Orchestra of Taipei, which will perform with the artists as well as accompany young participants during the final competition. Ching-Yun will perform and will later release a recording of her live performance, her third CD.

Grateful to people who have helped her throughout her career, Ching-Yun knows how important contacts can be to young, aspiring performers, and she wants to give those young people the same chance she had. Ching-Yun explains, "Musicians connect like dots; people you meet know other people all over the world. You never know when someone will give you an opportunity; it could be five years later or the next day."

Ching-Yun is currently preparing for her upcoming worldwide concerts. By the end of spring she will have performed in Germany, the U.S., Brazil, Taiwan and China with 10 more concerts planned by the end of 2012. In early 2013 she is performing in Philadelphia. For information about the Yun-Hsiang International Music Festival, visit www.yunhsiang.org, and for more information about Ching-Yun Hu, her concerts and recordings visit www.chingyunhu.com.